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THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL

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THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL

A STUDY OF CHRIST'S GREAT COMMISSION

BY THE

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PREFACE

THE Church's warrant for her missionary enterprize is contained in the commission given by Christ to His disciples after His resurrection. It has therefore a special value for the Church. While for general questions of faith and life the whole gospel is authoritative, for the work of evangelizing the world the resurrection gospel only is so. The instructions which Christ gave His apostles for their Galilean tours no doubt supply guidance in the wider sphere into which He afterwards sent them ; but it is only in the resurrection gospel that we have the sending into the wider sphere, and the wider message to be carried there. The commands it contains come even in this day with living power to the hearts of Christ's people. Death has not intervened since they were given to make us doubt whether their authority reaches into the present time. They are the commands of One who still lives the life in which He gave them, and is watching how His people keep His charge.

While the great commission is commanding a constantly increasing share of the Church's thought and activity, I have yet felt that there is the want of a connected study of all the records

of it contained in the Gospels and Acts, and until these be studied together its full scope and completeness cannot be realized. It is as an attempt to supply that want that this book has been written. I have examined the different records, and sought to apply their teaching to the problems and requirements of the present day. In doing so various questions occur, such as the doctrine of the Church and that of Baptism, the full treatment of which would go far beyond the scope of the present book. In dealing with them, therefore, I have sought to confine myself to those aspects of them that have a bearing on the missionary commission, and to leave controversial questions alone. The limitation of Christ's earthly ministry, and its necessity as a preparation for the universal mission of the resurrection, is treated in the first chapter; and the attempts of the higher criticism to discredit the genuineness of the commission, as we now have it, are dealt with in the Introduction.

While the form of the book and the greatest part of its contents are new, some parts have appeared in different periodicals. The substance of Chapters vi.–viii. appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, and the greater part of Chapter xii. in the *Expository Times*. They are now brought together in a connected form, with new matter added, in the hope that they may be helpful, especially to students of missions.

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INTRODUCTION

CRITICAL ASSAULT ON THE GREAT COMMISSION

It is to be regretted that before proceeding to study Christ's great commission, we have to face the question whether we have any direct commission from Him at all for the evangelization of the world. If this were denied only by foes of Christ, it would not be worth looking at. But it is denied by Christian writers, whose loyalty to Christ there is no reason to doubt, and who only deny that we have sufficient evidence that He gave the commission. It is therefore needful to look at their contention, and see what grounds there are for doubting the evidence that has hitherto satisfied the Church that He did directly give her a commission to evangelize the world.

The evidence for the commission lies, of course, in the records of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. The older criticism, which concerned itself more with the question whether the books of the New Testament, as we now have them, are the same as those originally received by the Church, has settled the question of the genuineness of the commission as a part

of these books. There is no doubt that the passages in question formed parts of the original documents, with the exception of that in Mark, and that even it is a very old fragment, accepted by the Church as genuine at an early date.

A more advanced style of criticism has lately been occupying the field, generally called the "higher criticism." It takes the books of the Bible as they have reached us, analyzes them, seeks to discover the sources from which they are drawn, and to determine how far these are authentic and historic. There is no doubt that this criticism has been very serviceable in illuminating the history and the literary structure of the Bible and in enabling us to estimate the value of its various parts. But this method has its dangers: it is apt to encourage arbitrary judgments and an undue exercise of the imagination; and now it seems to be running to seed, and to be producing an epidemic of criticism, in which sober judgment and common sense have no voice at all. When the bacillus of the higher criticism gets into the brain of even the ablest scholar, it tends to destroy all sense of proportion and of value. Slight phrases that to the ordinary mind seem to be of little importance, and to be capable of varied interpretation, have a rigid interpretation put on them, and are exalted into a position of determinative authority; passages that were considered clear and decisive are pooh-poohed as having no bearing on the subject; narratives that had long been considered true history are

set aside as mere tradition; in their place hypotheses, that have not even the sanction of tradition, are put forward as indubitable facts; and persons who refuse to accept these hypotheses as history, and who still hold to the accredited narratives, are treated with the loftiest scorn.

These traits appear very markedly in the assault that has been made by the higher criticism on the great commission given by Christ. It is the record of Matthew, and specially his account of the institution of baptism, that has been the main point of attack; but the records of the other evangelists have been conjoined with it, and demolished by the critics so completely to their own satisfaction, that one of them writes: "In maintaining that these commissions are genuine, theologians simply waste their words, and provoke unqualified scepticism." Theologians can take care of themselves, but there are numbers of earnest believers who have accepted the evangelic words as the parting commands of their Lord and Saviour, who are loyally seeking to fulfil them as living commands; and who may suspect from such assertions that facts have been discovered which discredit the authority of these commands, and which their teachers are keeping back from them, or not considering as they ought to do. Now there are certain facts on which all are agreed, and only in the interpretation of which there is difference of opinion. And for the interpretation of these facts all that is needed is just intelligence and common sense, which are

to be found among the average members of the Church as adequately as among critics and theologians.

As a summary of the main arguments against the genuineness of Matthew's record, we may take Harnack's grounds for rejecting Matt. xxviii. 19. "(1) It is only a later stage of the tradition that represents the risen Christ as delivering speeches and giving commandments. Paul knows nothing of it. (2) The Trinitarian formula is foreign to the mouth of Jesus, and has not the authority of the Apostolic age, which it must have had if it descended from Jesus Himself."[1]

The first statement here is that these sayings, including the universal commission, are the product of a later stage of tradition. This is not a fact, it is a hypothesis stated as a fact. It is adopted by the critics to account for these sayings of Jesus appearing in the Gospels if they were not uttered by Him; and it must be tested as a hypothesis before it is accepted as a fact. It supposes that the early disciples, after some time, added to the first accounts of the resurrection, and either consciously or unconsciously attributed these fictions to the risen Christ. The rise of the tradition is thus described by one of the advocates of this theory: "They form a second tradition, due not to Jesus but to the later spirit of the Church, which, on the basis of Dan. vii. 14 ff., idealized and expanded his earlier teaching under

[1] *History of Dogma*, i. 79.

the growing stress of reverence for his authority (Beyschlag, *N. T. Th.*, i. pp. 178, 318), and out of a consciousness of what his person and purpose meant to themselves and to the world."[1] Here there is the basis of a fact which all acknowledge, the great development which early took place in the Church in its conception of the universality of the kingdom of God. This development is explained by the older school as due to the words of Christ, spoken after His resurrection, sinking into the hearts of the disciples, and there germinating and expanding, under the guidance of His providence and the teaching of His Spirit. But these words, which by that school are regarded as facts and the cause of this development, are by the newer school looked on as fictions, and as the effects of this development. The causes by which they explain it will not bear examination. The passage quoted from Daniel might conceivably be regarded as the source of the apocalyptic discourse[2] attributed to Christ, but not of His resurrection words. Reverence for His authority would forbid rather than explain His disciples attributing to Him words which He never spake. Altogether, the hypothesis is not even plausible, and certainly cannot be accepted unless the gospel records be on other grounds discredited.

What are the grounds for believing the gospel narratives to be untenable? The first, given in

[1] Moffatt, *The Historical New Testament*, pp. 648, 649.
[2] Matt. xxiv.

the above extract from Harnack, is that Paul knows nothing of the speeches and commands of a risen Christ. If Paul knew nothing of them, it follows, presumably but not necessarily, that they were unknown to the Church before his time. But where is the evidence that they were unknown to him? For this Harnack refers to Scholten, and he quotes such passages as Rom. viii. 34: "It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." So also in Eph. i. 20: "When he raised him (Christ) from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places." In these passages the ascension is spoken of as following immediately on the resurrection, as being in fact identical with it. Consequently no room is left for the appearances of Christ after His resurrection, and for His giving the commands and promises attributed to Him. Paul therefore knew nothing about them, and the legend of them must have sprung up after he wrote. Such is the evidence as given by Scholten[1] and adopted by Harnack! I have said

[1] See Scholten, *Die Taufformel*, p. 6. Scholten speaks of the gospel narratives as portraying "a second earthly life" of Christ. They rather portray an earthly manifestation of His resurrection life. Like others of his school, Scholten sets aside the gospel narratives, and accepts 1 Cor. xv. 5–8 as the only authentic account of Christ's appearances after the resurrection. He seems to look on His appearance to Paul as the norm of the others, forgetting Paul's own words, "as unto one born out of due time, he appeared unto me also." He likewise assumes that Paul was the only one to whom He gave any commission, and that to the

that the higher critics and their opponents are agreed on certain facts. Both are agreed on the fact that these passages are written by Paul. It may be left to the intelligence and common sense of the reader to decide whether they warrant the assertion that Paul knew nothing of the commands of the risen Christ.[1]

The second reason given in the above extract from Harnack contains in fact two reasons. The first is that the Trinitarian formula is foreign to the mouth of Jesus, and the second that it has not the authority of the apostolic age. With regard to the former, if by Trinitarian formula is meant the Threefold Name, then it is foreign to the mouth of Jesus only in the sense that any saying uttered for the first time by any man is foreign to his lips. To the disciples meeting their risen Lord such a saying may have seemed foreign. The command to baptize would appear foreign too; so would the command to disciple all the Gentiles; and the giving of the Threefold Name would appear less foreign than the other two. It only epitomized His former teaching regarding God, whereas He had shunned baptism from the time He entered fully on His ministry, and going to the Gentiles He had forbidden. Indeed, the whole circumstances were foreign to any previous experience not only of the

others He either said nothing, or His words were not preserved by the disciples. He makes too great demands on our credulity.

[1] For a fuller dealing with Harnack's objections, see *The Sacraments in the New Testament*, J. C. Lambert (T. & T. Clark), pp. 36–53.

disciples, but of the world. Here was a Teacher risen from the dead, meeting His disciples once more. We could not imagine that He would meet them without speaking to them, or that He would merely tell them what He had told them before. That would have been to make the whole thing paltry and meaningless. There was a purpose in the resurrection, and to show His disciples that purpose, that they might take their part in accomplishing it, the risen Christ appeared to them. The purpose (besides the revelation of personal immortality) was to make the true religion universal instead of local. To accomplish this He first gave His disciples the commission to go to all the nations, instead of to the house of Israel alone, to which He had formerly limited them. Then, instead of making the kingdom of God rest on a single nation, which must always be distinct from all other nations, He substituted a Church, which might mingle equally with all nations and establish the kingdom of God among them. He did not formally establish the Church, but by instituting baptism He made its establishment a necessity. Baptism would have marred the work of His earthly ministry; it was essential for the work of His resurrection ministry,[1] and immediately following the resurrection He instituted it. Further, instead of the name by which God was made known to Israel, "Jehovah," He reveals a name for God suited for the universal Church, "Father Son and

[1] See *infra*, Chap. xii. pp. 289–290.

Holy Ghost."[1] This has been called a Trinitarian formula. It is no more a formula than "Jehovah" is a formula.[2] It is a name which may enter equally well into a baptismal formula or into a benediction formula, but it is independent of both.

Dr. Moffatt maintains that "it is not possible to hold that the formula 'sums up simply in a single phrase the theology of Jesus,' for although Jesus spoke of God as Father, and like every Jew had an idea of the Spirit, it is the objective collocation of these with himself that marks off this passage as unique."[3] But surely it is the mark of a great teacher to instruct his disciples in the elements of an important truth before giving them its synthesis. He says also that the incipient Trinitarianism "marks a stage of apostolic reflection which is in advance even of that indicated in Paul (2 Cor. xiii. 14)."[3] The Trinitarianism of the commission differs from that of the Pauline benediction as revelation differs from apostolic reflection. We can explain the benediction by the Name; we cannot explain the Name by the benediction. To suppose the Name to be the outcome of apostolic reflection is to suppose the apostles to have been philosophic theologians, which is quite foreign to all we know of their character. This Name is the root of the Trinitarian theology of the Church, not its fruit.

[1] See Chap. vi. pp. 153–155. [2] See Chap. xii. pp. 292–294.
[3] *Historical N.T.*, p. 648.

There remains the consideration that the Trinitarian formula "has not the authority of the apostolic age, which it must have had if it descended from Jesus Himself." The fact on which this objection rests is that during the apostolic age, as we know it through the New Testament, all baptisms were in the Name, or into the Name, of Christ. But the true explanation is that the "Trinitarian formula" was not prescribed. Our Lord did not prescribe formulas: He left that to His disciples. What He did give was the Name of God they were to teach and to believe in.[1] This argument, while it does not affect the evidence that the Threefold Name was revealed by Christ, is fatal to the theory that the Trinitarian formula had its root in apostolic practice or teaching; and we must look for some other explanation of its origin. The only rational explanation that has been proposed is, that when the Gospel of Matthew began to be circulated among the churches, the words of the commission at the close were looked on as determining the form that should be observed in baptism; because they were a faithful record of the words of Jesus, heard by Matthew and by the other apostles, taught by him, written down by him, and so preserved to instruct and mould the Church in the coming ages.

After all, the main point in the record of

[1] See pp. 292–294.

Matthew is the universality of the commission. This is the point which it has in common with the other records. This too has been made a ground of attack, and an argument for the late date of the commission. Dr. Moffatt has stated this with his usual terseness and point. "The universal mission can hardly have been known to the first disciples, or else they lived for years in flagrant disobedience of their Master's solemn command, and only reluctantly recognized its fulfilment in the Pauline gospel. For such an injunction as this could not be fulfilled by any mere passive acknowledgment of its claims as met in another man's person. It demanded active personal propaganda on the part of the disciples, and this is precisely what was not forthcoming, to judge from our records of the apostolic age."[1]

Now, here we have a twentieth-century criticism of a first-century transaction, that takes no account of the difference between the first century and the twentieth, between men trained in Jewish ideals and men trained in Christian ideals, and that makes no attempt to estimate the essential requirements of the command with which it deals. Even from the twentieth-century point of view the criticism is at fault. A little experience in the mission field would have shown the writer that direct personal propaganda is not always the best way to evangelize a large country, especially if it be civilized. To establish

[1] *Historical N.T.*, p. 648.

a strong mission, to found a strong Church in the capital or some centre, and let the work radiate out from there, is often found to be much more effective. A band of present-day missionaries, with the light of all the centuries to guide them, if sent on such a mission as the apostles, would probably act much as they did. Directed to begin in one particular city, if they found their work and success there so great that they had to call in additional help, they would consider that a sufficient indication that their work would be best done by remaining there till they saw a distinct call to go on.

Moreover, the apostles were Jews, trained up in Jewish ideals. It was no new ideal for them to make disciples of all the nations. For generations they had been trying, subject to the limitations of their law, to make the nations disciples of Moses. Proselytism was a prominent feature in the life of the Jewish nation when the Messiah came. They had only one idea as to how this proselytism was to be conducted. It was carried on by Jews, who for business or other purposes had settled in the lands of the Gentiles, and who took advantage of their position to inculcate their faith. The idea of men being set apart specially to go to other lands to teach them religion had not yet dawned on the world. Dr. Moffatt speaks of the desperate plight to which literalists are reduced, in supposing that the apostles saw in the Pauline mission the dis-

charging of the task allotted to them. But this is exactly what would seem normal to any Jew. Paul belonged to Tarsus, Barnabas to Cyprus,—it was their part to evangelize these lands; while the apostles belonged to Jerusalem, and it was their part to do the work there.

When Christ gave them the command to disciple all the nations, He did not prescribe any method, but left it to their judgment and experience. The only distinct direction He gave was to begin at Jerusalem. This they carried out so faithfully, that when persecution broke out and the rest of the disciples fled, they braved the danger, and remained true to their post. But when, consequent on persecution, the Church began to expand, they followed it as faithfully to the different places to which it spread, to tend and encourage it. They had even recognized the Gentile churches at Cæsarea and Antioch, before Paul began his forward work, and their recognition of it was only a further development of the same principles of action. Now, all this can be explained only by a distinct command from their Master. If they had had nothing but the example and teaching of His earthly ministry, with its careful shunning of the Gentiles, and its distinct prohibition to go among them, their very reverence for His authority would have made them resist uncompromisingly any attempt to make disciples beyond the pale of Judaism. If we had had no record of a universal commission from Jesus,

we would have been obliged to postulate one. The disciples were somewhat slow in grasping the full bearing of the charge given them, as men usually are in taking up a new idea, but under the discipline of experience,[1] and the teaching of the Spirit, they reached at last something of the largeness of view and of purpose embodied therein. And if even to the end they did not realize its full meaning, it is only what may be said of the Church of to-day, after all the centuries of experience through which it has come.

It will be seen that the critical assault on the genuineness of our Lord's commission need not be taken very seriously. Nor need we doubt that the words we have in the gospel records are substantially the words of Christ, as He spoke them to His disciples after His resurrection, as they preserved them in their memory, and delivered them to the Church. Perhaps the best proof after all of their genuineness is that they are still living words, and speak to believers in this century with as much constraining power as to those who first heard them.

It is to be feared, however, that behind the critical objections, and giving them what weight they have with most people, is the rationalistic objection, which would reject the whole narrative because it is miraculous. On

[1] See Chap. v. pp. 130–134.

this objection I do not need to dwell. It is the outcome of a purblind philosophy, which sees only one half of the revelation of nature—natural law, and nothing more. To those who have open eyes to see the vision of nature, and who take in man as part of that vision, it is plain that in the universe, besides law, there is will, and will is constantly manipulating law, so as to produce results apparently quite contrary to it. The question of miracle then is simply a question as to whether or not there is in the universe any will higher than that of man. For those who deny it, miracle is of course impossible, and to them I have nothing to say. For those who do believe in a supreme Will, miracle is only an act and revelation of that Will. With them I desire to consider that miracle, which is the supreme revelation of the will of God for the salvation of the world, and the supreme call to the service which He requires of them, to work along with Him for that great end.

THE RESURRECTION GOSPEL

CHAPTER I

THE MESSIAH OF ISRAEL

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the Gentiles:"[1] such was the commission Christ gave His disciples, when He met them in His resurrection life. "Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:"[2] such was the commission which He had given them when He sent them forth in Galilee. These two commissions show the difference between the resurrection gospel and the Galilean gospel. The one was for the world, the other for a single nation. Depending

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19. Both Authorized and Revised Versions use the word *nations* instead of *Gentiles* in Matt. xxviii. 19. The original word, *ta ethna*, is the same as in Matt. x. 5, and must be translated the same in both cases, to bring out the contrast. I translate it by *Gentiles* here, as it brings out best the meaning it would have for the disciples. When we come to consider its application to the present day, we shall fall back on the stricter translation, *nations*.

[2] Matt. x. 5, 6.

on this distinction, there are in the later gospel fresh revelations, fitting it for its universal aim—a revelation of God responding to the need of all men for One to revere, to trust, to commune with; a proclamation of the forgiveness of sins full and complete for all men; a promise of power unfailing and adequate for the vast task set before the disciples. There would have been little purpose in revealing these truths with the earlier commission; the later would have been impossible without them.

But while there is this difference between the form of the Galilean and that of the resurrection gospel, we must not for a moment suppose that they are two gospels, any more than we may suppose that the rosebud and the full-blown rose are two flowers; or rather, that the corn of wheat which falls into the ground and dies is different from the hundredfold fruit which it brings forth. The former before its death contains the promise and potency of all the hundredfold fruit which appears in its springing up from the ground. The gospel which Jesus before His death taught in Galilee contained the promise and the potency of that which He proclaimed when He arose from the dead. Even the universalism which is the distinguishing glory of the resurrection gospel was potentially present in the severe limitation of the earlier gospel. The strict limitation of the first message to Israel was as essential for the ultimate preaching of the gospel to all mankind as the universal sweep of

the message of the resurrection. It was the final call of God to the Jewish nation to rise to a true conception of its own mission to the world, and to fit itself for the discharge of that mission. A brief study of the universal aim latent in Christ's earthly ministry is necessary to enable us to understand that the universalism of the message of the resurrection is not a break in the divine plan, but the full maturing of it. We shall look first at the mission of Israel to the world, and then at the mission of the Messiah to Israel.

I. The Mission of Israel to the World

Throughout the whole of the Old Testament we find the truth proclaimed, that Israel was called to be a blessing to the world, to be the witness of the one true God to the nations. To Abraham the promise was given, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;"[1] and the promise was renewed to Israel,[2] from whom the nation sprang. When the temple was built at Jerusalem to be the shrine of the one true God, Solomon in his dedicatory prayer asked that the prayer of the stranger might be heard, "That all the peoples of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as doth thy people Israel."[3] The prophets, too, had taught Israel to look forward to such a consummation. Isaiah had prophesied, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains,

[1] Gen. xxii. 18. [2] Gen. xxviii. 14. [3] 1 Kings viii. 43.

and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."[1] Habakkuk had sung, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[2] In the psalms which they sang the same great truth was impressed on the Jews: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee;"[3] or again, "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify thy name."[4] Thus constantly the destiny of Israel to have its faith spread among all the nations of the earth was kept before the minds of the Jews.

Nor were they untrue to this ideal. It was not indeed any missionary motive that first led them to seek its realisation. Providence had dispersed them among the nations. The captivity of Babylon had begun the work. Only a comparatively small number of the Jews had returned from it to settle in their own land. Led mainly by motives of trade, they began to go among all the nations of the world, and wherever they went their abilities brought them to the front. There were political circumstances, too, that greatly favoured them, and led the rulers of the states in which they settled to grant them privileges which roused the jealousy and resentment of their own subjects. Strabo bears witness to this

[1] Isa. ii. 2; see also xlii. 6, lx. 3, etc.
[2] Hab. ii. 14.
[3] Ps. xxii. 27.
[4] Ps. lxxxvi. 9.

universal diffusion of the Jews: "These Jews are already gotten into all cities, and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by it."[1] In much of the literature of the period we find traces of this ubiquity and influence of the Jewish race.

They had thus by providence been brought into a unique and wonderful position for fulfilling their great mission of being the witness of Jehovah to the nations, and leading them to own Him as God. Nor did they fail to use it. Wherever they went among the nations they remained loyal to their faith, and maintained the great truth committed to them, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord."[2] All the requirements of the law they observed as far as they could in a strange land. Sacrifice they could not offer, for that was permitted only at Jerusalem, but the "sacrifice of the Sabbath" they did offer, and abstained from work and from commerce on that day. Wherever ten of them resided in one city, a place of prayer was established; and as their numbers increased a synagogue was built, in which they met every Sabbath to worship and to hear the scriptures read, and to which they welcomed the Gentiles to hear them also. Thus, by being faithful to the requirements of their religion, they bore witness to it before the Gentiles.

Nor did they rest content with passive

[1] Quoted Josephus, *Ant.* xiv. 7. 2.

[2] Deut. vi. 4.

witnessing. As the destiny of their nation became more manifest to them, they made direct efforts to win the Gentiles to the law of Moses and to the worship of the temple. In the political as well as religious revival under the Maccabees, when they attained power for a time over some of the neighbouring nations, they used force to proselytize. John Hyrcanus, when he conquered the Idumeans, allowed them to remain in their own land, on condition that they adopted the Jewish faith and practice.[1] In the same way, somewhat later, Aristobulus constrained the Itureans to join the Jewish community.[2] When the Jews were deprived by Rome of political independence, they sought to propagate their faith by more directly spiritual methods: by seeking to convince their neighbours of the truth of their faith that there was but one God, and of the blessing that would come to them by joining the one race that He owned as His people. Josephus describes the methods used by Jewish missionaries, and tells with triumph of the conversion of some illustrious converts, including kings.[3] Not only were the Gentiles made welcome to the worship of the synagogue, they were also made welcome to that of the temple. A special court was set apart for them in it. This was outside of that reserved for the Jews, and they were thus made to feel the distinction between them, but it was hoped that they might

[1] Jos. *Ant.* xiii. 9. 1.
[2] *Ibid.* xiii. 11. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* xx. 2. 4.

thus be led to cast in their lot fully with the chosen people. This winning of the Gentiles was the ultimate aim of the Jews in all their religious intercourse with them, and the zeal, possibly perverted zeal, with which they pursued it is witnessed to by our Lord, when He says, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte."[1]

And they had begun to make impression on the Gentile world. The old religions of Greece and Rome were already losing their hold on the people, especially on the thoughtful and sincere. They inspired no conviction, and their rites were observed without faith. In the midst of this effete paganism the spectacle of a people maintaining unswervingly their faith in a God who satisfied the intellectual, moral, and spiritual cravings of man, a people who observed steadfastly and with conviction all the rites required by their law; who looked to the one sanctuary in Jerusalem as the centre of their religion and of their race, the one shrine of the one God, where sacrifice was daily offered for them—could not but impress all who felt that religion should be a reality and a power. So the synagogues came to be the resort of Gentiles as well as of Jews,[2] and numbers of them went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifice there to the one God. Before the coming of Christ, Judaism seems to have thrown a spell over multitudes in the Roman empire, and to

[1] Matt. xxiii. 15.

[2] See Ramsay's *Cities of St. Paul*, pp. 300–303.

have been regarded with an awe which it is difficult for us to realize. We can trace this in the references to it in classical literature. Men seemed often scornfully opposed to it, but glad to secure advantages which might be secured by propitiating its Deity. The Emperor Augustus himself is an instance of this. He commended his nephew for sailing by the coast of Syria without following the usual custom of going up to Jerusalem to sacrifice,[1] but he had sacrifice offered up for himself daily in the temple. Judaism was then the only living aggressive religion in the empire, and the wonder is not that so many were impressed by it, but that with its splendid opportunities so few were won to accept it.

The explanation is to be found in the character of its universalism. It was defective in its adaptation to men as such, and in its ethical character. It required all who accepted it to be subject to the limits of Jewish nationalism, and it required attention to ceremonialism rather than to right living.

In the earlier stages of the history of Israel the normal attitude of the people with regard to religion was, that Jehovah was the God of Israel alone, while other nations had gods of their own. Other nations were not expected to worship the God of Israel, and Israel was forbidden to worship the gods of these nations. By the teaching of the prophets and the discipline of the captivity, the Jews had been led to faith in Jehovah as the one

[1] Suetonius, *Aug.*, 93.

only God of the whole earth, and to look on the gods of the nations as no gods. But while they had come to believe that there was one only God for the whole earth, they had not come to believe the corresponding truth that He might be worshipped acceptably by all the nations of the earth. On the contrary, they still continued to believe Him the God of their nation alone, who could be worshipped by no other nation than theirs. If a Gentile did desire to worship Him, he could do so only through them as mediators. Hence the Jews looked down from a haughty height of spiritual pride on the nations among whom they sojourned, kept themselves apart from them, and held to all their own rites and ceremonies as badges and means of their superior sanctity.

The only way for a Gentile to attain the full privilege of a worshipper of the one God was to enter the Jewish community, to submit to baptism and circumcision, and all the ceremonial laws regarding eating and purification which these carried with them. He thus separated himself from his former comrades, and could find full social intercourse only among his new co-religionists. And as men who act thus are apt to put a higher value on what they have sacrificed so much for, these proselytes ordinarily became more intolerant than the Jews themselves. This fact was noticed by the Gentiles, and roused the indignation of Roman writers, who accused the Jews of being enemies of all the human race, except their own tribe, and of making those

whom they proselytized even more bitter than themselves.

While the Jewish religion thus failed in adaptability to humanity, it failed not less in its ethical requirements. No doubt the Jews had a moral law of the highest perfection, but they were continually lapsing from it. The prophets in their time were ever by fresh messages from God calling the people from iniquity and ceremonialism to righteousness and spirituality. But for generations no prophet had appeared. The people had the written law as their guide, and it was interpreted by the priests and scribes in the interest of their own professions. They set more value on the ceremonial details of the law than on its weightier matters: on tithes, purifications, and such like, than on doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. As a consequence the moral character of the Jews had deteriorated. We need not believe all the accusations brought against them by their Gentile neighbours; but Paul, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,[1] brings an indictment against them as crushing as that against the Gentiles in the first; and the testimony of Josephus bears out these charges to the full.[2] Our Lord sums up terribly the result of their proselytism when He says, "Ye make him twofold more a child of hell than yourselves."[3]

Such was the position to which Jewish universal-

[1] Rom. ii. 17–24.
[2] *Wars of the Jews*, x. 9. 4.
[3] Matt. xxiii. 15.

ism had come: one God for the whole earth, that God the Father of only one nation, the Judge of all the rest; a law fitted to regulate aright the lives of all men, superseded by a law fitted only for maintaining the exclusive position of their own nation. We can understand how such a religion repelled the Gentiles as much as it attracted them, and made it hopeless that they should ever become Jews. And the Jews too had come to realize that all their efforts were futile. They did not attribute this to any failure on their part in presenting the truth committed to them, nor suspect that the witness they were bearing to God was such as to cause His name to be blasphemed. Appropriating still to themselves all the glorious predictions of the prophets as to the spread of the Messiah's kingdom, they looked for their fulfilment to the coming of the expected Messiah Himself.

And the expected Messiah did come.

II. The Mission of the Messiah to Israel

Ere Jesus began His public ministry as the Messiah, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and was there tempted of the devil forty days.[1] It was the supreme instance of the conflict through which every soul must pass that purposes doing a great life-work. Into this theme I do not propose to enter further than to look at that one of the recorded temptations which

[1] Matt. iv. 1–11.

bears specially on our subject—that in which the devil showed our Lord all the kingdoms of the world, and offered them all to Him, if He would fall down and worship him. That was a temptation coming to Him as the Messiah: it presented to Him that conception of the Messiah's kingdom for which the Jews were working, and which they expected to see triumphant when the Messiah should appear. Already were His subjects scattered among all nations, already were they seeking to win them to Him. Let the word go forth that their Messiah had come to reign, and they would work with irresistible power. Those that would not yield would be subdued as the Idumeans had been, and the rest would speedily accept the law of Moses as their rule, the temple at Jerusalem as their only sanctuary, the priest-king who reigned in Zion as God's vicegerent over them; while the chosen people would be gathered in and established in the wide lands promised to Abraham and his seed, to enjoy with their Messiah the benefits of His reign over all the earth.

Such was the conception of the kingdom of the Messiah among the Jews, and such was the kingdom to the attainment of which the devil tempted Jesus. If He had accepted the offer and come before His people as their leader in attaining it, He would have been acclaimed by all the Jews of Palestine and of the Dispersion. They would have become His enthusiastic followers, and been ready to fight and to die for

Him. But what would have been the price? It would have been to proclaim the one God of all the earth as having only one place on all the earth in which He could be worshipped, the God of all nations as being the God of one people alone to whom all others must conform, the God of holiness as desiring to be served with rites rather than righteousness, the God of heaven as manifesting His kingdom on earth by earthly pomp rather than by a spiritual sway over the hearts of men. It would have been to fall down and worship Satan, and rivet his chains on mankind. Such an alternative Jesus repelled with horror, both when it was first presented to Him in the wilderness, and when it afterwards met Him in the course of His ministry;[1] and turned to accomplish the work His Father had given Him to do in the way the Father desired it to be done.

It is beyond our purpose to inquire into the whole of Christ's ministry and teaching. It is with only one topic that we have to do: how in it He carried out the universal aim of the kingdom of God. Here it seems at first sight as though He failed to reach even the universalism of the Jews, and both by practice and precept condemned their efforts to win the Gentiles to faith in the God of Israel. But we must endeavour to look behind this apparent limitation to the purpose that inspired it, and we shall see the universalism of divine wisdom. To see truly the attitude of Jesus towards the Gentiles, we must

[1] Matt. iv. 10, xvi. 22, 23.

first take a survey of the gospels to see how it is presented in them.

We may begin with the *Gospel of Luke*, which is considered specially the gospel for the Gentiles. It presents Jesus as the Son of man, the Saviour of the world. Yet in this gospel there is less of outlook beyond the house of Israel than in any of the others. Only in the prophetic glance of the aged Simeon does the light fall on the world beyond—"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."[1] Luke seems to have written the Acts to illustrate the first part of this prophecy, and his gospel to illustrate the second part. He is the only one of the evangelists who ignores the Gentiles in his record of Christ's ministry, and who does not ignore the Jews in his record of Christ's resurrection.[2] In telling of the centurion whose servant Christ healed, he mentions what Matthew does not, that the centurion did not come personally into contact with Jesus, but approached Him through the elders of the Jews.[3] He records His contrast between the faith of the centurion and that of Israel, but not His forecast of the coming in of the Gentiles, which that revealed to Him.[4] In the prophecies regarding the last things, he omits all reference to the Gentiles. Any passages that may be interpreted to include a reference to the Gentiles are couched in words that suggest

[1] Luke ii. 32.
[2] Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8.
[3] Luke vii. 3–6.
[4] Matt. viii. 11, 12.

no opposition to Israel.[1] But while in this gospel there is no distinct outlook on the Gentiles, there is no sense of constraint or narrowness. We see Jesus, the Son of man, doing His work among His fellow-countrymen, because He could thus best do His work for men. Though limited in actual extent, it is felt to be potentially part of a universal work. If the wider field is kept out of view, so also are the limitations which it implies. The only note of this kind is in the words, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"[2] This suggests the limitations of His human frame rather than those of His national position, though, as we shall see, the death here intimated was to be the solution of them also.

In the *Gospel of Matthew* Jesus is set forth as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel who was to draw the Gentiles to Himself. Of this we have a historical symbol at the beginning of the gospel in the visit of the wise men from the east.[3] It is in this gospel that we have the record of Jesus' anticipations regarding the Gentiles. It tells how the centurion's faith revealed to Him the entrance of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven, while His own people were shut out: "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and

[1] Luke xiii. 29. [2] Luke xii. 50. [3] Matt. ii. 1–12.

Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."[1] Again, after the parable of the vineyard, He says to the Jews, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given unto a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."[2] In His prophecy of coming events, He tells His disciples that they should be hated of all nations for His name's sake;[3] and that the gospel of the kingdom should be preached for a witness unto all nations before the end should come.[4]

The same evangelist shows us the terrible restraint which Christ felt in speaking to the Gentiles. This comes out in His meeting with the Canaanitish woman,[5] the only Gentile, besides Pilate, with whom we may be sure that Jesus actually did speak. Even with her the intercourse was not in the first instance direct. She did not get an audience of Jesus till the disciples had made intercession for her; and when they asked Him to send her away because she was crying after them, He showed that there were higher principles by which He must be guided than their convenience, or even His desire to help the needy,—"I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." These words show a consciousness of the limitation of His mission, that while His gospel would be welcomed

[1] Matt. viii. 11, 12. [2] Matt. xxi. 43. [3] Matt. xxiv. 9.
[4] Matt. xxiv. 14. [5] Matt. xv. 21–28.

by the Gentiles as it was not by the house of Israel, yet He Himself was bound to confine Himself to the latter, and might not set the restriction aside on any plea. The same consciousness comes out in His words to the woman, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." These words have a bitter sound, but He was just forcing the woman to find a ground on which she could make a claim on Him as the Messiah of Israel. He had an intuition of her ready wit, which forced Him by the very logic of His own position to grant her request: "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" and drew from Him the commendation, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." This incident reveals alike the possibilities of faith which existed among the Gentiles and the stringency of the restraint which held Jesus back from ministering to them.

This restraint was not for Himself alone but for His followers as well. When He sent forth the twelve on their first evangelistic tour, He forbade them to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans,[1] and limited them to their own countrymen. Till the Jews put Him to death He confined Himself and His disciples to them; and He was laid in the grave with their lips sealed by His command to the Gentile world. One contingency He does mention, in which they might be constrained to break through this

[1] Matt. x. 5.

restriction: "Before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."[1] We do not know of any instance in which this was fulfilled before Christ's death; it is rather another instance of how He looked forward to His kingdom spreading among the Gentiles.[2]

The *Gospel of John* presents the inner, spiritual side of Christ's teaching more prominently than the other evangelists. It is therefore natural that questions of Jew and Gentile should be avoided, and the universal aspect of God's kingdom be presented. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus declares the universal principles on which it is founded.[3] The spiritual, not the natural birth is the title to the citizenship of the kingdom, and may be attained by men of all nations. The love of God, shown in the gift of His Son, is a love for all the world, bringing salvation to "whosoever believeth." To the woman of Samaria He teaches a worship in spirit and in truth equally acceptable in all parts of the earth.[4]

It is only in the closing scenes that John records any communication between Jesus and the Gentiles, and in His words we have a full, though somewhat enigmatical, statement of His

[1] Matt. x. 18.

[2] As Mark's Gospel contains no incidents bearing on this subject beyond Matthew's, I have not referred to it.

[3] John iii. 1–16. [4] John iv. 21–24.

relation to them. At His last Passover some Greeks came to one of His apostles desiring to see Jesus.[1] We are not told whether He gave them any reply, but His words on hearing their request showed how He regarded the incident: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified."[2] He had been waiting for the hour that was to break down the barriers that held Him in, and open to Him all the nations of the world. That was to be accomplished in a way His disciples little imagined: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[3] It was only death that could emancipate Him, and open up to Him the dominion over all nations. The request of the Greeks was a token of how the Gentiles were waiting for Him. He saw that now the crisis of the world[4] was come, and that He was called to go forward, and by His death to bring out of that crisis glory for the Son of man in the salvation of the world.

To sum up this brief study of what the gospels show to have been Christ's attitude towards the Gentiles: we see that He knew that He came from God, the embodiment of God's love to save the world; that the truth He taught was the only truth by which men could be saved; that it would find acceptance among the Gentiles such

[1] John xii. 20–22. [2] John xii. 23. [3] John xii. 24.
[4] "Now is the crisis of the world," John xii. 31.

as it would not among His own people. Yet He confined Himself to His own people, resolutely refrained from all work among the Gentiles, and forbade His disciples to work among them. Only after His death did He look forward to His gospel spreading among them, but even for this He gave His disciples no command.

In this Jesus was absolutely opposed to the methods of all the great leaders of men. They have been noted for the insight with which they availed themselves of openings into fields which promised great results. They have put their work on lines on which it might be carried forward, uninterrupted by their death; and where they have not done so, their work has not endured. Had Mohammed confined his work to Mecca and Medina, and forbidden his followers to go beyond Arabia, we could not conceive of his religion spreading beyond the land of his birth. Or, to take an instance nearer home, had Wesley confined his work to Oxford and the church of England, and forbidden his followers to work beyond it, we could not conceive of them being more than a party in that church. But He, who had a message for mankind the most universal that ever came into the world, refused to deliver it, or to allow His followers to deliver it, beyond His own people; and to the day of His death did not relax the prohibition. Yet His religion has spread and influenced the world as no other religion has

ever done, and after nineteen centuries still inspires His followers with unfailing purpose to win all nations to own His sway.

How are we to account for this? Looking at the sequel of His death, we get the explanation, but we also feel that if His ministry had been other than it was, the sequel would not have been the triumph that it has been. And the question remains, Why was this limitation of His earthly ministry necessary for the ultimate spread of His religion? And that question has a present value for us. Working as we now are for the spread of His kingdom among all nations, how may we be sure that it was the same great purpose that our Lord had, when He first forbade His disciples to go among them? While it might be sufficient to say that His divine knowledge showed Him that so it was best to do; yet, if we look carefully into the question, we shall see that, judged even by the canons of earthly prudence, it was the true course to take. It is indeed only up to a certain point that we can do so. It is in this as in the whole life of Jesus. We judge Him by human standards, and find His conduct perfect; but we always come to a point where the human analogy fails, and we are forced to look to something superhuman, to something divine.

Let us then try to realize Jesus beginning His ministry, conscious that He was the Messiah promised to Israel, and that as such He had for His mission to win the world to God and to

establish His kingdom among all men. There were two ways open to Him to seek to accomplish this: the one was to go as He had opportunity to all men of whatever race and teach them the great truths with which He was charged; the other was to confine Himself to the Jews, among whom He was placed, to win them to the pure worship of the God whose worshippers they professed to be, and use their world-wide organization for spreading the truth throughout the world. The former was the course that seemed most obvious; but a little reflection will show that it would have made His task hopeless. He had no authority to speak to the Gentiles. He could have gone among them only as a Jewish teacher, with no sanctions but those of the Jewish revelation, which had already failed to secure acceptance; or those of natural religion, which the Gentiles indeed possessed from the beginning, but which they had come to disregard. Though He might have placed the truth before them with a convincingness such as no other had ever done, and though He might have won many followers, He could not have won the nations. It needed the power of a fresh revelation—such as afterwards came through the resurrection—to enable His word to conquer the world. Further, if He had begun working among the Gentiles, either exclusively or partially, while Judaism was still unshaken, His work could hardly have escaped being dominated by it. We know what a hard fight Paul had to deliver the Gentile churches from it, even

after the Jews had rejected their Messiah, and we can see how impossible it would have been, if their foundations had been laid while He was still under the law. Christianity could then have been little more than a sect of Judaism.

On the other hand, when Jesus began His ministry, the Jews were still by their call, by their history, by the ground-principles of their faith, the chosen people of God, His witness to the world, the instrument for the establishment of His kingdom among all the nations. The position with regard to them had come to be, that either their religion and practice must be cleansed from all the formalism and corruption which were ruining it, and so be fitted for spreading everywhere; or that they must be rejected from being God's people, and other instruments be sought for establishing His kingdom on the earth. And the means for both of these ends was the same—an earnest, persistent, unswerving effort to work a reformation among them. If they were to be made worthy of being God's people, it could only be by such an effort; if they were to be rejected, it could only be by their own resistance to that effort, and their rejection of Him who made it. Therefore Jesus set Himself with a single eye to work out the salvation of the people as whose Messiah He had come, by teaching them the true nature of the kingdom of God, the need of sincerity rather than formalism, of inward obedience rather than outward ceremonies, of looking in all things to

the will and favour of God, rather than those of men. How perfectly He discharged His great ministry the gospels are the record. His very aloofness from the Gentiles was part of His great plan. He could not have gone among them without seeming to be hostile to His own people. But His enemies, while they could accuse Him of receiving publicans and sinners, could not accuse Him of receiving Gentiles. He worked steadfastly on to the end among His own people. Judged by human standards, Jesus should have desisted from His task as hopeless, and left the Jews to their own devices, long before His ministry closed. But there was always the conceivable possibility to the very last that at length the truth might prevail, and the heart of the Jews be won, that they might accept and not reject Him. This is the divine charity, and this Jesus manifested up to the last hour of His life. His tears over Jerusalem, His bloody sweat in Gethsemane, are the witness of the agony it cost Him when He saw that the issue was to be rejection and not acceptance—their rejection of Him, and, consequently, God's rejection of them.

Here the thought cannot but arise, What if it had been otherwise? If all the men of Galilee had been like the disciples; if all the men of Jerusalem had been like the family of Bethany; if all the rulers had been like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; if the whole people, instead of rejecting Him, had hailed Him as their

Messiah,—what would the result have been for the Jewish nation, and for the world? It is perhaps vain to speculate what course history might have taken, had any one of its great crises issued otherwise than it did; and yet the human mind can hardly refrain from so doing. Specially vain is it to do so in this supreme crisis of all history; yet here too the mind feels the necessity stronger than ever of asking what might have been, if the issue had been different. It was for this different issue that Jesus laboured: the aim of His ministry was to win the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and He laboured for success, not for failure.

What, then, would have been the result for the Jews, if they had accepted Jesus as their Messiah? They would have learned that the essential of their religion was spirituality, not ceremonialism; and that if the former existed, the latter might vary without prejudice; that the title to a place in God's kingdom was not descent from Abraham, but the faith of Abraham; that acceptable worship was worship in spirit and in truth, and not worship dependent on any one place. And as a consequence, not perhaps at once, but as the new spirit prevailed, the special sanctity of the temple would be disallowed, the necessity of rites and ceremonies would be denied, and the right of believing Gentiles to a place in the kingdom of God would be conceded. And what would have been the result for the world? Then the Jewish communities scattered throughout the world would have become centres for the

spread of His faith, instead of centres of opposition. The Jews, led by their Messiah, would have become the leaders in the regeneration of the world, and the progress made would have been such as the actual facts of history only faintly show.[1]

And how, it may be asked, would the great moral and spiritual requirements have been met that were satisfied on Calvary? We must remember that God's gift of His Son consisted in His being born as a man, subject to all the conditions of humanity, but without sin. Death is one of these conditions, and the death of the cross is but one of its forms. The acceptance of Jesus by the Jews would probably have hastened by a generation the conflict with Imperial Rome, which the Christian Church had

[1] The following extract from the remarkable work by the Rev. Morris Joseph, *Judaism as Creed and Life*, shows that the anticipations of the pious Israelite now are very much what is sketched in the text: "This is the picture of the future, which consoles and inspires the pious Israelite. He looks forward to the time when the beautiful truths about God and duty, which the great souls of his race have conceived and cherished, will be universally accepted by the world. But this is the limit of his outlook. He never dreams of the world accepting Judaism in its entirety, with all its ceremonial practices as well as its religious creed. There are elements in Judaism which are not of a universal or even of a permanent character. They are intended only for Jews, and even for them only temporarily. The external character of Israel's religion has changed from age to age in response to his shifting needs and ideas, and there is reason to believe that it will continue thus to change in the years to come. It is not these transitory constituents which, according to Jewish doctrine, will go to make the future religion of the world. Perhaps by the time that the world is ready for an universal religion, these constituents will have passed away even from Judaism."—Pp. 164, 165.

ultimately to face. Then the Jewish nation would have suffered martyrdom with their Messiah, instead of inflicting martyrdom on Him. But what they might have suffered for accepting Him would probably only have been a tithe of what they have had to suffer for rejecting Him.

Whatever may have been at one time the hope of Jesus being accepted by the Jews, it soon became evident that it was vain. We need not pause to trace the growth of the enmity that rose against Him. The final result was that He was seized and brought before the council, and then all came to a point.[1] When questioned as to His divine nature and divine mission, while He showed that He had no hope of justice, He yet maintained boldly His own position: "If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I ask you, ye will not answer. But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God. And they all said, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am." Thus was the issue clearly put before the supreme council of the Jewish nation, the council whose action would be that of the whole nation. And that council gave the verdict, "He is worthy of death."[2] Thus they rejected Him from being their Messiah, and accomplished their own rejection as the people of God.

With the condemnation of Christ by the council, His mission to the Jews as such may be

[1] Luke xxii. 66–70. [2] Matt. xxvi. 66.

said to have come to its dark close. He was now free to go to the Gentiles, and the first consequence of His rejection by His own people was His appearing before the Gentiles and declaring to them the nature of His kingdom. Accused before Pilate of claiming to be King of the Jews, He goes at once behind the question of a merely Jewish kingship, and comes to the foundation of His claim in Israel, and therefore of His claim to a universal kingdom in the world: "I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."[1] The people of Israel had been called to bear witness to the truth, and if they had been true to their calling they would have heard His voice and followed Him. But they were not of the truth, and so shut themselves out of His kingdom. Still, however, members of the house of Israel as well as children of the Gentiles might hear His voice and enter into His kingdom.

Here another alternative and another question present themselves. It was conceivable that Pilate, instead of scouting the truth, might have listened to it, might have acquitted Jesus, and protected Him with all the power of Rome. That was not only conceivable, it was what might have been expected, if the traditions of Roman justice had been preserved; and the question occurs, What might have been the

[1] John xviii. 37.

course of events if Pilate had been as firm as he was weak? And the answer is, His acquittal could have been only of the nature of a temporary truce. The world hated Jesus, and Rome was the world-power. If at first it had shielded Him, it would, when it realized His message, have sought to crush Him, as it afterwards sought to crush His followers. Pilate, in yielding as he did, was unconsciously carrying out the principles of the world-power whose representative he was. All the "might have beens" are swept away before the one awful fact, that the Gentiles combined with the Jews to put to death the Son of God, who had come to save the world.

Gentiles and Jews were alike implicated in the death of Christ, but their guilt was not the same. Jesus had not come to the Gentiles as their Messiah. Their guilt was not that of rejecting Him, but that of putting to death an innocent man. With the Jews it was otherwise. Jesus had come as their Messiah; had sought with all the power of divine love and patience to win them, and they had conclusively rejected Him; and in so doing had sealed their rejection by God.

The hour that brings death to a nation may pass unnoticed, and the ordinary course of affairs may go on as though its powers of life were still unimpaired. The Jewish nation, after it had crucified its Messiah, continued to exist and to

show its former vitality. It still continued to exercise some fascination over the Gentile world, and its synagogues continued to be centres of religious interest. But as years passed it became evident that its power was gone. In the synagogues the words of a new faith began to be heard, which they drove out, but to which the Gentiles turned. Then came the war with Rome: the temple was destroyed, sacrifice ceased, and the Jews came to be as much despised and shunned as they had formerly been honoured and courted. All attempts to restore their national existence only made it more apparent that God was no longer with them. They still exist in all parts of the world, among all nations but not of them, maintaining themselves with unconquerable vitality, through all the terrible persecutions that have burst on them. Their influence is felt in nearly every sphere of human activity, in literature, in music, in art; above all, in commerce and finance. Only in the one sphere for which they were called by God to be a nation they are now of no account at all: they have no influence on the religion of the nations among which they dwell. Their holy books are known through the followers of Him whom they crucified. Their synagogues are as severely let alone as they were once sought after. Whatever the governments that have to deal with them think it needful to do, they never think of shielding their subjects from being proselytized by them. And as little do the Jews

think of proselytizing: they hold fast to their faith, but do not think of it as fit for others. They have come to be a negative of the Theocracy, a kingdom of God without God. Truly the second alternative of the Messiah's mission has been fulfilled: His people, having rejected Him, have been themselves rejected.

Here we must clearly understand what this rejection of Israel means. It does not mean that they were excluded from salvation. Paul, in his argument in the Epistle to the Romans,[1] distinguishes in the past history of Israel between those that are truly of Israel and those who are not, between those who obtained salvation and those who did not. And so he maintains it continued to be. It was by members of the house of Israel, who believed, that the foundations of the Church of their Messiah, the Christian Church, were laid. And since then to the present day the Jews have furnished many of the noblest converts to Christianity, and most effective missionaries of its truth. But Israel was rejected *as the instrument of God for the salvation of the world*, through whom alone the nations could come to know God and His salvation. That had been their high calling hitherto; that they had failed to fulfil, and that by their rejection of their Messiah they had shown themselves incapable of fulfilling.

And who was to take their place? Let us try

[1] Rom. ix. 6–13, xi. 1–12.

to place ourselves in that dark hour when the Messiah of Israel was laid in the tomb, and ask, What hope remained for the world of knowing God? The answer is, None. The promised Messiah had died without leaving any legacy for His followers. The truths which He had taught were by His express command sealed within that nation which had rejected Him. We may say that if the tomb was the end of Christ's work, or if He had contemplated it being the end, then He was guilty of one of the greatest crimes against humanity that has ever been committed. Possessed of the only truth that could save the whole world, He had communicated it to His disciples with the injunction that they should not carry it beyond the house of Israel. His disciples could only hope to be a sect of the Jews, and the nations beyond would have to lie in the darkness of eternal ignorance. Such was all the outlook that remained for the world, had the Messiah of Israel been as other teachers, and had no resource higher than theirs. But He was not as others: He had a resource such as no human teacher ever dreamed of. He left as the one sure hope for the world the promise, given whenever He foretold His death—that *the third day He would rise again.*

CHAPTER II

THE RESURRECTION

The four evangelists all record the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In their narratives there are discrepancies which, with our present knowledge, we cannot reconcile. If those critics are right who require as a condition of the narratives being reckoned trustworthy that they should dovetail into one another with absolute accuracy, then there is nothing to be said. But a little reflection will show that to require this would be to require evidence of invention and collusion, which would destroy, instead of assuring, trustworthiness.

There are times when communities are thrown by some startling event into a state of excitement and confusion, which makes it impossible for them to note calmly, or remember clearly, what took place. At such times probably no two impressions will be exactly the same, no two accounts of the event will entirely agree, and no attempts to harmonize them will be successful. But to discredit them on that account would be as unreasonable as to assume that all the narratives are absolutely accurate. Two

elements are to be taken into account on such occasions: the facts that occurred, and the psychological effects they had on those who witnessed them. Only when the latter have been duly weighed can the residuary and unquestionable truth with regard to the former be determined.

Never in the history of the world did an event occur so calculated to throw into mental confusion those who were witnesses of it as the resurrection. Let us try to imagine the state of the small band of Christ's disciples on the morning of the resurrection. They had just experienced the most crushing blow that any company of men had ever experienced. We can hardly realize how they must have been stunned by the crucifixion of their Master—how they would feel the shame and dumb despair of men whose hopes had been crushed and who knew not what to do—the terror of men who dared not make any move, lest the blow should fall on them too. To them in the midst of this despair comes word that the tomb in which their Master had been laid has been found open, and the body has disappeared; then the news that angels have appeared to some of the women, telling them that He is risen; then His appearance to one, then to another, then to them all who were gathered together. What would be the one great truth that would impress itself on the minds of the disciples? It would be that Jesus was risen indeed. The details by which

that conviction was wrought they would never think of heeding. And as the great event floated into the past, and its living practical effects made its truth more certain, they would think less and less of the steps of evidence which had convinced them; till at last all attempts to settle them in due sequence, if they ever thought of making them, would be wholly impossible. Thus this very impossibility of harmonizing the narratives becomes one of the strongest evidences of the truth of the great central fact which they all relate. It may be said that inspiration should have prevented these discrepancies; but inspiration was given only to secure the record of what is needful for salvation. It is needful for salvation that we know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, lives now, and will live for ever. It is not needful for salvation that we know the exact sequence of events through which this first became known.

There are two ways in which the records of the resurrection may be studied. One is to assume that nothing can occur at variance with the laws of nature as known to us, and that these records must be explained in conformity with them. This is quite a legitimate assumption with which to start, if it be also conceded that it may be held only so long as it is found to be tenable. Now the almost invariable course of the application of this method has been to form various hypotheses to explain

the origin of the belief in the resurrection, which hypotheses, when tested by the residuum of fact that cannot be set aside, break down utterly. Then there remains the other alternative of examining the records as honest, *bonâ fide* attempts to relate what took place, interpreting them according to the usual laws of evidence, and accepting the conclusions to which we may thus be led. And if we are led to conclusions beyond all other human experience, we must accept them as revelations of what is above that scheme of nature known to us.

Now, such an examination of the records leads to the conclusions that the tomb in which Jesus of Nazareth had been laid was, on the morning of the third day thereafter, found empty, the grave-clothes and the head-band lying in the places where they had been laid, but the body round which they had been wrapped not there; that subsequently He appeared at various times to His disciples, singly or together, coming when He was not expected and had no apparent means of entrance, and disappearing as unexpectedly; that He was recognized by them as Jesus their Master, and held intercourse with them as before; that after forty days of such converse He was in their presence taken up out of their sight, and appeared to them no more.

Such is a brief statement of the event that has influenced the world more than any other

that history records. It is beyond my purpose to examine particularly these appearances of Christ after the resurrection, and to take up the evidences of that supreme miracle as generally presented. But there is one evidence germane to the subject with which we are to deal, one double in its presentation but single in its result; and that is, the Christ revealed and the gospel taught in the narratives of the resurrection. The Christ is the same as He who walked this earth before, yet not the same; the gospel He taught was the same, yet changed as He Himself was.

The risen Christ, as shown in these narratives, is the same as He who lived in Galilee, yet not the same. For one thing, He had the power of appearing and disappearing such as no man ever had, and such as He had not before His decease. He appeared among His disciples when they were not expecting Him,[1] and when they had taken precautions for preventing anyone entering the room; and He disappeared from their presence without their being able to say whither He had gone.[2] This feature in His appearances may at first seem evidence of hallucination on the part of those who reported them; but, taken in conjunction with the event from which they sprang, it is evidence of sanity and truthfulness, such as a closer conformity to ordinary human conditions would not have been. To suppose that a man

[1] John xx. 19. [2] Luke xxiv. 31.

had passed through death and remained exactly the same as before would be a far greater strain on our credulity than to suppose the greatest changes in him. There would then have been no great purpose in the resurrection, and the appearances would rather have been evidence that the Christ had never died, which is the explanation given by some.

The change in Christ after the resurrection may be regarded as a revelation of the nature of the resurrection body. But there is a more important end served in these appearances of Christ, and that is to enable us to realize that He may be present with us, though unseen. Let us try to enter into the experience of the disciples during these forty days. They were the transition period between the earthly and the heavenly ministry of Christ. In them Christ led His disciples beyond the experience of His bodily appearance to which they had been accustomed, on into an apprehension of the spiritual presence which was to be their experience in the future. He taught them to realize that He might be present with them, in their very midst, when they knew it not; and that it only required an act of will on His part to make Himself visible to their bodily sense. When at last He ceased these manifestations and ascended on high, they could still realize His presence with them though unseen; and what they thus realized has come to be the heritage of all believers since. We believe in His presence with us in all places

and in all times—a present Deliverer, and not merely one whose work is past.

And in the gospel He taught after His resurrection we find a similar change. Much of it was the same as before, but of that we have no record, only some indications. He expounded the prophecies concerning Himself, but these expositions have not been preserved. What has been preserved is something entirely new, almost a reversal of what had been given before. It is that His work is no longer to be confined to the house of Israel, but that all nations are to be made His disciples, that His gospel is to be as universal as the human race.

That the Christ lives for evermore, that His gospel is for all mankind—these are the twin truths of the resurrection gospel. And we can see how dependent they are on each other. We could hardly imagine the Christ in all the authority and glory of His resurrection confining His work to the house of Israel. We feel that anything less wide than the world would not be commensurate with the new life to which He had risen. And likewise we could hardly conceive a commission to evangelize all the world being given by one who had been born and died the Messiah of Israel, and who could show nothing beyond. A work which was to extend throughout all the world, and which it would require all the ages of the world's history to complete, demanded for its accomplishment a life that would continue through all these ages. That was the only con-

dition on which His disciples could hopefully enter on such a work. Therefore so long as they knew Him only in His earthly life, He never once hinted that they were to attempt it.

This brings us to that evidence of the resurrection with which I propose to deal—the universalism of the resurrection gospel. Some plausible attempts have been made to account for the belief in the resurrection by some of Christ's own sayings in the days of His flesh. Whenever He spoke of His death, He spoke also of His rising again on the third day. Some find in this the origin of the belief in the resurrection. It predisposed the disciples, they say, to accept without adequate investigation the report that the tomb had been found opened and empty, and led by a natural psychological process to beget in their minds the visions of the crucified One. Whatever value may be attributed to such explanations, they cannot explain the message to all the nations of the world, which Christ gave after His resurrection. Not only had He never given any such message in the days of His flesh, His commands had all been the other way. By precept and example He had taught that His mission was only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is true that in the pre-resurrection gospel its universalism was implicit. But a truth that is merely implicit can never become active and practical in the world: it needs to be made

explicit. Had the history and teaching of Christ ended with the cross, He would have been a failure as a religious teacher. Having taught the only truth fitted to regenerate mankind, He emphatically shut it up to one nation alone. How then has it spread? Whence has it got its element of aggressive universalism? His followers might, from a conviction of the perfection of their Master's teaching, have sought to spread it, as the followers of Buddha have done. But if they had tried to spread it beyond the Jews, they would have done so not in virtue of their Master's command, but in spite of it; not in loyalty to Him, but in disregard of Him. Let us try to think what the Church would have felt herself warranted to do, if the only injunction of her Lord with regard to the spread of His gospel had been, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not."[1] How has the Church come to reverse this and to substitute all nations for the house of Israel? How has the universal commission come to have such an imperative hold on the conscience of the Church?

We cannot answer this question by any recorded saying of Christ's before His death. If it be said that the words of Christ which have so affected the Church may be reminiscences of what the apostles had heard from Him while He was yet in the flesh, though they are not recorded, the question arises, Why, when they

[1] Matt. x. 5.

did come to be recorded, were they not put in the true connection in which they were uttered, instead of being put outside of His earthly life altogether? Or if it be said, as is widely maintained by modern criticism, that these sayings are the fruit of the awakened consciousness of the Church, attributing to the command of the Master what was really the consequence of carrying out the latent principles of His religion, the answer is that this is looking for the cause in the effect, and there remains to be explained why not even a suggestion of them has been attributed to His earthly ministry. We are shut up to the conclusion that the universal commission, that commission to which the Church looks as her warrant in carrying the gospel to all nations, was given by Christ after His death, and given by Him in personal intercourse with His disciples in His resurrection life. It is only by the resurrection that the universal aim of the gospel is to be explained.

It is well to notice, too, how Christ prepared His disciples for this universalism; for it lets us see how truly it was in His mind as His ultimate aim, even while He was most strictly limiting His own work and that of His apostles during His earthly ministry. We have seen how this very universalism necessitated that limitation, and the same consideration prevented Him revealing it to His apostles. It was one of the things which they could not then have borne. It would have confounded and perplexed

them, and distracted them from their immediate work among the house of Israel. But while He did not prepare them for their work among the Gentiles by telling them of it, or by giving them a prospective commission, He did prepare them for it by leading them to look for that which was to make it imperative. Uniformly when He prepared them for His being rejected and put to death by the house of Israel, He told them that He would rise again from the dead. That was enough for them to look forward to, and when they had seen it accomplished He taught them all that it meant. The moment He entered on His resurrection life, He gave His disciples the commission to do that work for all the world in which His resurrection life enabled Him to be ever with them. The world is the sphere of the risen Christ and His disciples, as the house of Israel was the sphere of the Messiah and His disciples in the days of His flesh. The missionary vocation of the Church, all the efforts she is making to fulfil it, are abiding evidences that Christ is risen indeed. Still, after nineteen hundred years, He continues, in the power of His endless life, to inspire and sustain His followers. The commision He gave at the moment of His resurrection is as binding on us as on those to whom it was first given, and owning this we proceed reverently to study it.

CHAPTER III

THE RESURRECTION COMMISSION

We have five records of the giving of the great commission, one in each of the gospels, and one in the Acts of the Apostles. While in all the five we find the same general features, we discover something special in each, and only when we look at all together do we discern its full sweep. In them, as in the accounts of the resurrection, there are discrepancies, but they do not present the same difficulties. In the interviews which Jesus had with His disciples during the forty days He must often have referred to the same subject, and done so in different words. Even when we have two versions of the same interview, it is only natural that each evangelist should fix on what most impresses him.

Of the five records three are definite as to the occasion: that of John refers plainly to the appearance of Christ to the eleven and those who were with them on the evening of the resurrection day; that of Matthew, to a meeting with the apostles on an appointed mountain in Galilee; that in the Acts, to the day of ascension from Mount Olivet. The

narrative of Luke is indefinite. It obviously begins with the appearance on the evening of the first day of the week, and apparently continues in unbroken sequence to the ascension. To those acquainted with Luke's method this presents no difficulty. He groups together in one narrative all that he wishes to tell of what took place in Jerusalem from the resurrection to the ascension. I am inclined to consider the account of what took place the first evening after the resurrection as closing with ver. 45 of the twenty-fourth chapter; and verses 46–49, containing the commission, as referring to a later meeting shortly before the ascension. The narrative at the close of Mark's Gospel, like that of Luke's, links the meeting on the first day of the week with the ascension, and is probably a summary of what was considered most important in the words of Christ during the interval. I will therefore take first the record of John, then that of Matthew, then that of Luke, then that of Acts. Following this plan, we shall see a distinct development in the delivery of the great commission. The narrative at the close of Mark's Gospel, on account of its special character, requires to be treated separately.

I. Record of John

(John xx. 19–23)

"When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut

where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had said this, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them again, **Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.** And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, **Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.**"

Here we may first notice the persons who were present and to whom the commission was delivered. They were disciples. From John's subsequent narrative we learn that Thomas was not present, and from Luke's narrative we learn that others were present besides the apostles.[1] Practically, then, there were representatives of the apostles present, and representatives of the other disciples, so that the commission was given to the Church as a whole, and not merely to its leaders. Next we notice the spirit of these disciples: they were met in fear and trembling with closed doors, and we can understand why such should be their feelings. At once all was changed. Jesus stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be unto you." His conquest of death brought them assurance of peace such as they had never had before. And He showed them His hands and His side, to assure them that it was indeed their Lord who had been crucified

[1] Luke xxiv. 33.

who now stood before them. Then were the disciples glad—and we can understand why they should indeed be filled with triumphant joy—and at once, when they were brought to this glad trust, Christ gives them their commission. He lets them feel that the joy which was filling their hearts must find its outlet in carrying on His work: "Peace be unto you; as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

He prefaces the commission by again saying, "Peace be unto you." They might be at peace, for He was showing them that they had not incurred His displeasure on account of their recent failure; since He was confiding to them the carrying on of the great work which He had come to begin on earth. And He implies, too, that that peace was to be secured just by doing the work on which He was sending them, as He had found peace in doing the work for which the Father had sent him. Peace is fully attained by service.

The commission as here given is less definite than in the other gospels, but it has a wider sweep; and it implies much of what is stated definitely in them. As the Father had ever been with Christ in the work He had given Him to do, so would Christ ever be with His disciples in the work He was giving them to do. As the Father had given His Son the Holy Spirit to equip Him for His work, so would Christ give His disciples the Holy

Spirit to equip them for their work. There is in these words, too, the appeal of example. The Father had sent Christ knowing that He would not fail, but would be obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and Christ had not failed. That is the model of obedience and sacrifice which Christ expects His people to seek to emulate, in the mission on which He sends them. Above all, He here sets before them the supreme authority which they have for their mission. In doing the work on which He was sending them, they were doing the work which the Father, God over all, had sent His Son to do, and through His Son was sending them to do.

Two additional details are mentioned in this record of the commission. The first is breathing on them and bidding them receive the Holy Ghost. This is not the same as the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost: it is not the gift of the Father of which Christ had spoken,[1] and of which He spoke again.[2] It was the gift of Christ Himself, given for a special purpose. The successive stages of the gift of the Spirit were adapted to the stages of revelation at which they were given. A new stage had been reached in the process of revelation: Christ had risen, and the disciples needed a fresh power of the Spirit to enable them to understand what was thus being revealed to them. It is the inner side of that

[1] John xiv. 16, 17, 26. [2] Acts i. 4, 8.

same act of which Luke speaks, when he says, "Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures."[1] It was an earnest of the fuller baptism they were to receive when the revelation through Christ was completed in the ascension.

And it is in view of this complete fulfilment that we must understand the final word of the commission: "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained unto them." There is an interpretation of these words which would confer on man the prerogative of God; which would confer on the apostles, and those who consider themselves their successors, the power to bestow or withhold forgiveness at pleasure. For this there is no warrant. It means simply that they were to be enabled by their possession of the Holy Spirit to discern whose profession or repentance was sincere and whose false—who therefore had obtained forgiveness and who had not—and to declare it before men.

But there is also a wider sense in which the words may be applied. It was only by carrying out the mission on which they were sent that the disciples could bring men to know and obtain forgiveness of sins. There was thus an awful responsibility resting on them to preach the gospel through which alone men could obtain that forgiveness; or to refrain from

[1] Luke xxiv. 45.

preaching, and leave men to have their sins retained for ever. These words carry us forward to the end of all things, when the results of the mission of the Church will be made manifest. All the generations of men will then appear —sinners all, but one part of them with their sins forgiven, the other part of them with their sins retained. And how much of this will be due to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the Church in carrying out her Lord's commission!

We have, then, in this brief version of the commission its beginning and its end: its beginning in the sending forth of the Son by the Father, its end in the final determination of all men. The very generality of its terms impresses all the more the sense of its high origin and binding obligation; and we turn to what we find in the other gospels for the definite guidance we need in carrying it out.

II. Record of Matthew

(Matt. xxviii. 16–20)

"But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, **All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.**"

The scene of this manifestation of Christ was a mountain in Galilee, where Jesus had appointed His disciples to meet Him. Those who were present are here said to be the eleven disciples. We learn from Paul of a meeting in which Jesus was seen of above five hundred brethren at once,[1] and it is generally supposed that this was the occasion. In favour of this supposition there is the circumstance that this is the only occasion on which there was a meeting by appointment between the risen Christ and His disciples; and it is probable that many would hear of it, and that all who could would come. This derives further probability from the statement that some doubted. We could hardly suppose that this would have happened if there had been none but the eleven present. At all events, it was a meeting that had been specially appointed, and we may therefore conclude that there was a special reason for appointing it. Adopting a phrase of secular politics, we look to this meeting for a manifesto of the new policy of the kingdom. The death and resurrection of the Christ had brought on the crisis of the world. Old things had passed away: all things had become new. The world at large was as yet utterly unsuspicious of any change, but those who came to this meeting with their risen Lord were keenly aware of it, were expecting the triumph of their Master to be made manifest to all, and were in the spirit to hear

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 6.

the programme of how this was to be accomplished.

Christ first declares His claim to universal obedience: "All authority hath been given me in heaven and on earth." Before His death He had been under the authority of the law. There were eternal principles underlying it whose authority could never change; but there were also special commands and ceremonies, serving a temporary purpose and destined to pass away. To these, too, Christ had been subject during His life on earth: He had fulfilled all righteousness as required by the law. From this obligation He was now emancipated: He was now Lawgiver; and His Word and Spirit were to rule the kingdom of God in the future. The Jews claimed that their law was divine, and that no earthly teacher could set it aside. Jesus met this by asserting His authority in heaven as well as on earth. Granting that the law was given by the authority of Heaven, He had now all authority there, and could set the law aside, now that its purpose was fulfilled.

And the first command He gives overthrows all former restrictions: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the Gentiles." Unless we take this translation, we cannot realize how the command must have appeared to His disciples. The Gentiles were the nations who were not of *the* nation Israel; they were therefore not of the kingdom of God, and could enter it only by entering into the community of Israel. "Go

not into the way of the Gentiles," was the command Christ had given when He was under the authority of the law. Now that all authority in heaven as well as on earth had been given Him, He broke down the barrier, and welcomed all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, to His discipleship.

It was long ere the full significance of these words was apprehended by the disciples. Some maintain that at first they only thought of them as referring to the Jews scattered among all nations. But this is to forget the aspirations of the age, which the disciples shared with their fellow-countrymen. We have seen how the Jews were looking forward to a universal spread of their faith, when the Messiah should come. The disciples knew that their Master, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Messiah, endowed now with all authority in heaven and on earth. They would look on this command as one to accomplish the expectation of their nation; but they expected that it would be done by bringing the Gentiles at the same time under the law of Moses. They could not get quit of the belief that the Messiah Himself was under that law instead of above it. It was when the first application of this command took place, in the reception of the household of Cornelius, that the Church was constrained to give practical effect to the claim of our Lord, that He had authority to set aside the restraints of the law, and to remove from the Gentiles the imputation of being

unclean. Even after that, the struggle with old national prejudices continued, and it was not till that generation had passed, and the temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed, that the Church entered into the full liberty that Christ had given her.

The first means He indicates for discipling the nations is "baptizing them." He did not need to explain to His disciples what baptism was. It had been used by the Jews in receiving proselytes into the Jewish community; they all knew the baptism of John, and they themselves had for a time practised it. Though Jesus had shunned it during His ministry, yet now that He was about to establish a distinctive kingdom in the world, He recognized the need of a badge that should distinguish it from the world, and instituted baptism as a sacrament.

He bade them baptize "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This name summarized the teaching He had given in His ministry regarding God as the God of salvation—the Father in heaven who loved them, the Son who came to redeem them, the Holy Spirit who was to be sent to comfort and guide them. This was not a formula of baptism, it was the faith into which the nations were to be discipled. No one of the three names could be left out without leaving out some essential element of salvation. The significance of baptism we shall consider after first looking at the rest of the commission.

For discipling the nations Christ appoints the two elements which we uniformly find in the records of the commission: human agency—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you;" and divine power—"Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." The teaching they were to give was the same as He had taught before. There was no outworn truth to be dropped, no new truth to be proclaimed, except the universality of the offer of salvation, and the great facts of the crucifixion and resurrection, on which that salvation rested, as on a rock that could not be shaken. The resurrection gospel gathers up all the truth in the pre-resurrection gospel, vitalizes it with the divine facts which fulfilled the one and founded the other, and opens it up for the whole world instead of for one tribe alone.

The promise to be with them to the end of the world was given in view of the coming separation. During the forty days He was showing them how He could be present with them though they did not see Him as before, and had only occasional revelations of His presence. These revelations were soon to cease, and He assures them that, though the occasional intercourse of His resurrection life must pass, as the constant intercourse of His earthly ministry had passed, He would still be with them, and be for them all that He had ever been, and even more abundantly.

And now we can see clearly the significance of baptism. Jesus here makes a covenant with His disciples. They are to teach the nations the things He has commanded: He is to be with them and bless them in so doing. Of this covenant baptism is the symbol and the seal. Whenever the disciples baptized any people, they undertook to teach them, and Christ promised to be with them. In this covenant they were sent to disciple the nations.

III. Record of Luke

(Luke xxiv. 46–49)

> "And he said unto them, **Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the Gentiles, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high.**"

The first thing to be noted in these words is the linking of the new gospel with the ancient scriptures. In John's Gospel we are taken back to the origin of the great commission in heaven, and to the act of the Father in sending forth the Son. Here we are taken back to the preparation for it on earth. The sufferings and death of the Christ, His rising again from the dead on the third day, and the preaching

of the gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews, which was to follow therefrom, were no unforeseen developments in the plan of God for the regeneration of the world, but the carrying out of what had been beforehand determined on, declared, and prepared for. We might wish that we had Jesus' own unfolding of the prophecies regarding Himself; but none of the evangelists have recorded that: they have confined themselves to the commission. Luke tells us that He opened their minds that they might understand the scriptures. Without the opening of the mind these scriptures cannot be understood. The scriptures are still in our own hands, and to those who ask, the Holy Spirit is promised to open the mind.

The scope of the commission is here given: "All the Gentiles, beginning from Jerusalem." It is better to keep this translation, if we would understand how the commission would impress the disciples. Our Lord makes it plain that the gospel is for the Gentiles too; yet not for them alone, but also for the Jews, and for the Jews first. The word of the Lord was to go forth from Jerusalem;[1] and that city might be saved by the faith which was to flow forth from it. The kingdom of God was now open to all the world, but to Jerusalem was still open the honour of leading the way to this conquest of the world by accepting the gospel which was to be offered to it first.

[1] Isa. ii. 3.

Christ here indicates the essential truths of His gospel: "repentance and remission of sins." These are the distinctive features of His gospel, and distinguish the religion resting on it from the religions of the nations to whom He was sending His disciples then, and from the religions of the nations to which the Church is sending her missionaries now. They had been taught in an immature form by the Jews, but had been neutralized by being conjoined with the law of Moses, as the goal of repentance and the condition of forgiveness. Christ with the words, "In my name," freed the divine message from all such limitations, and made it depend on Him alone. He had by His death on Calvary supplied the reality of that forgiveness, of which the sacrifices of the law had only expressed the need; and He had by His resurrection shown the true goal of repentance, an eternal life which death could not destroy.

Then He shows the double means by which the message was to be spread, the word of the disciples and the power of the Holy Ghost: "Ye are witnesses of these things" — His disciples were to bear witness to the things which they had seen and heard; "I send on you the promise of the Father" — the Holy Spirit, without whom their witness would have no power. Until they had this power they were not to begin their work, but were to remain in the city awaiting enduement.

IV. Record of the Acts

(Acts i. 6–12)

"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, **It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.** And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel: which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come as ye beheld him going into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet."

In this record we have Christ's final charge before ascending into heaven. Let us look at its points in succession. First, there is the spirit in which the commission is to be discharged: "It is not for you to know times and seasons." It was natural enough that the disciples should desire to know what was about to take place. The only conception which they had as yet formed of the triumph of their Master was that He should be owned as the Messiah of Israel throughout the wide world. When they saw Him now triumphant over the grave, when they had been promised power from on high, they felt

that surely now was the time for this being fulfilled. So it has always been. Even the truest believers have been ready to interpret the plans of God by their own outlook, and to expect the work of the years of the Most High to be brought within their own span of time. Christ therefore bids His disciples not concern themselves with these questions. They belong to God alone: He has revealed them to no one, and what He requires of His people is to do in their own day the work He has appointed them for that day, with the power He gives them, and to leave Him to mature His work in His own time. To the disciples was given the charge of being witnesses of Christ, to them was given the power of the Spirit, before them was set the uttermost parts of the earth as their field. Till they had overtaken that field it was not for them to inquire as to times and seasons.

The commission here is somewhat different from that given in Luke. It is to *be* witnesses. The disciples were to bear witness of the things they had seen and heard; but they were to do something more: they were to *be* witnesses. They were by their lives and words to show the power of the living Saviour in them. This was a much harder thing to do than merely to bear testimony, and therefore Christ promises them very definitely the power by which alone it could be accomplished: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

The field in which they were to work is here

put differently from what it is in the other records. Nations are not mentioned, but lands. The question is lifted above that of nationalities, of Gentiles and Jews, and is put on the basis of God's earth. Wherever that extends, there the gospel is to be preached. Special attention must be given to the order in which the fields are put, for that contains a lesson for the Church of all times. First, there is "Jerusalem and all Judea." Why are they put first? Simply because Jerusalem was the place in which the disciples then were, and in which there had been some preparation for the message which they were to give. Then there was Samaria. It was next to Judea geographically and also in its preparation for the gospel, through its partial acceptance of revealed truth. Finally, there were the uttermost parts of the earth, those lands into which no revealed truth had come, or to which it had come only through Jewish sojourners. Thus there was set before the Church three concentric fields of work: her own city and land, to which the truth had come, neighbouring lands in which it had been corrupted, heathen lands where it was unknown. For the Church in Great Britain the application is—London and all Great Britain, the Continent of Europe, and the uttermost parts of the earth. The gospel begins at home, but woe to the church that lets it stop there—as we shall subsequently learn from the disasters that befell the first church of Jerusalem.

Then took place that great event which launched the Church forth to fulfil her great commission, and which made that fulfilment possible. As He spake, while the words, "The uttermost parts of the earth," were still ringing in their ears, He was taken from them, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Then they knew that He was to be with them no more on earth, and that, while His promise remained true to be with them to the end of the world, His presence was not to be one realized through the senses, which would require Him to be locally present in one place at one time; it was to be a spiritual presence, which could be realized equally in Jerusalem and in the uttermost parts of the earth.

And while they were straining their eyes to catch, if possible, another glimpse of their Master, their minds were turned from the past, which was now closed, to the future, and to the great event which was to close it for them. Angels stood beside them, who told them that the same Jesus who was received up into heaven would so come again in like manner as they had seen Him go. Then they might look to again giving their account of how they had fulfilled their commission, as they had formerly done in Galilee, and to receive the reward their Lord had promised them.

Record of Mark

Those that we have considered are the four authentic records of the great commission. There

is another appended to the Gospel of Mark, though it is generally considered not to be from his pen. He seems to have been hindered from finishing his gospel. The eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, where the authentic portion is allowed by all to end, breaks off in the middle of the narrative.[1] The remaining verses, 9–20, have been added to bring the narrative down to the ascension. Whether they are notes prepared by Mark, from which he purposed finishing his gospel, or, as is more generally supposed, were the work of another hand, they have the authority of the Church from an early date. They show what was accepted at the time they were written; and we shall look at the version of the commission as given in them.

(Mark xvi. 15–18)

"And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.**"

Here we have the commission in its most universal form. Instead of "all the nations," we

[1] Some consider that Mark's Gospel was originally complete, and that its present incomplete form is owing to the last leaf having been accidentally torn off. And this has set them an engaging task to restore the conclusion that has been lost. This hypothesis

have "all the world," "the whole creation." The offer of the gospel is here put on the basis of creation. Salvation is as wide as creation. We can realize it only as applied to man; but a renewed manhood will bring every department of creation into harmony with the purpose for which it was created. This is the view so strongly insisted on by Paul.[1]

Then we have the counterpart of the final issue as given in John: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." The commission as given in John seems to lay the burden of remitting or retaining the sins of mankind on the disciples—a burden certainly too great for them to bear. In this version we see that the final responsibility rests on the men themselves in so far, at all events, as those are concerned who have heard the gospel. It is ultimately belief, or the refusal to believe, which determines their final destiny. It is to be noted that baptism is connected with believing as a condition of salvation. The meaning of this in lands where the gospel is being spread is very obvious to those who have been engaged in that work. Many are ready to say that they believe the gospel who will not take the step that finally cuts them off from heathen society and links them openly with Christ.

requires us to suppose that there was only one copy of Mark's Gospel, or that all the copies had the page torn off at the same place. Mark is not the only writer who has been interrupted in his work and not had the opportunity of finishing it.

[1] Rom. viii. 19–21.

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We have here no mention of the gift of the Holy Spirit, but we have the power in a concrete form. Many miraculous gifts are mentioned, of most of which we have instances in the Acts of the Apostles. They are promised as signs of the power that was to be with the disciples, making their preaching effectual.

These, then, are the five records of the great commission which Christ gave to His disciples for the salvation of the world. There is in them some of the local colouring of the time and place in which they were uttered, without which they would be lifeless and unreal. Yet we feel, as we read them, that they are words as living and authoritative now as when they were first uttered—words which Christ might address to any meeting of His followers now without any essential change, and be speaking to the times as truly as then. We therefore proceed to consider the commission as addressed to the Church of to-day. And we shall do so by taking up in succession the various topics suggested by it.

CHAPTER IV

THE LORD OF THE RESURRECTION

The last words of our Lord to His disciples are a commission, not a legacy—a charge given by one who lives to guide its accomplishment, and require an account for its fulfilment; not a charge given by one who has died, and left it to his successors to carry out as they will. All men leave a legacy of some kind or other when they leave the world. We could hardly conceive a man so utterly isolated that he passes without a trace of influence for either good or evil. The great men of this world, men who have led nations by their living power, have left to those nations the legacy of their achievements and of the spirit they inspired. Great thinkers, who have perhaps exercised less influence in their own day, have left the legacy of their thoughts and rules of life to mould the thoughts and lives of future generations. In all these cases the personal influence and authority of the man pass, and the legacy whether of thought or precept is valued only for its own sake. When we take up the teaching of even the greatest of the old philosophers, we never think of it as a personal matter between him and us; we have

not to answer to him for our following it or neglecting it. So it is not with Christ. With Him we have still to do. We do not realize our relation to Him if we speak of the commission He *gave* His Church. We must speak of it and think of it as the commission which He *gives* His Church, which He *gives* us. Until the Church of this generation realizes that the commission is one given to her now by a Lord who is living and ruling in His resurrection life, she has not realized her true position with regard to it. Before studying the commission itself, then, in the light of the present day, let us try to realize something of the Giver of the commission in that same light; for it is on faith in Him that the discharge of His commission must rest. We shall look first at the meaning for us of His eternal life, and second at the basis of His authority over us.

I. The Eternal Life of Christ

The eternal life of Christ is the necessary consequence of His resurrection. We now proceed to consider its practical bearing on the work of the Church and on the life and conduct of all believers. We shall look first at its bearing on the teaching of the pre-resurrection gospel, and then at the greater fulness revealed in the resurrection gospel.

The great truth of Christ's teaching in His earthly ministry on which this bears is that of His second coming to judge the world. I do

not seek to unfold His teaching on that point. I will take it for granted that my readers know it and believe it. But how would it all have appeared if the life of Christ had terminated with the cross? His disciples then could only have looked forward to His being raised from the dead on the last day to do the work of judgment, as the Mohammedans expect that Mohammed will be raised. But the resurrection changed this conception entirely. It showed to the disciples that Christ lived, that He was awaiting not in the tomb but in heaven, not in the unconsciousness of death but in the consciousness of eternal life, the hour when He should come again to the world for its final judgment and redemption —that this supreme event depended not alone on the evolution of providence, but on the will of the living Lord who knew what was passing in the world, and who was free, when the moment arrived, to return for the vindication of His cause and for the triumph of His kingdom.

This revelation has had a powerful influence on the Church in all ages. It filled the whole life of the first church in Jerusalem: they lived in hourly expectation of the return of their Lord and the end of the age. It was the inspiring motive in the early apostolic churches; and in the doubt and discouragement caused by its delay the apostles had to cheer the faithful by assurance of its certainty and of their sharing in its triumph,[1] though it might be delayed beyond

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 16–18; 2 Pet. iii. 9–13.

their lifetime. Since then there has been hardly an age in which numbers have not looked for the immediate coming of the Lord, and attempts been made to fix the exact date at which it might be looked for. These attempts to know the times and seasons have come to be more and more discredited; but the faith remains strong as ever in the Church that Christ lives; and the obligation is recognized, whether it is acted on or not, to watch and to pray, to be prepared to meet Him if He should appear immediately, or to wait patiently if He should delay His coming.

This attitude expresses the whole conception of many Christians with regard to Christ: He has redeemed the world, commissioned His Church to apply that redemption to the world, and He Himself is waiting in heaven till the work be accomplished, or brought to the point when He shall return to reign. This conception, while true in so far as it goes, is entirely inadequate. It is essentially a deistic conception. Deism conceives of God as the Supreme Being, who created the universe, ordained fixed laws for its guidance, and then left it to itself without further interposition. This view of Christ's work conceives of Him as having redeemed the world, charged His followers to spread His gospel, and then left them without further help or guidance. And just as deism tends to produce disbelief in God, this tends to produce disbelief in Christ.

But the resurrection gospel reveals something

more with regard to the resurrection life of Christ than merely that He does live. It shows that His life has a present value for His people: in it He is working *with* them, and *for* them. We have first the promise given in Matthew, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[1] This shows that Christ is ever *with* His people in the work He calls on them to do. Then we have the promise as given in Luke, "Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you,"[2] and more definitely in the Acts, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you."[3] These passages declare the work He is doing *for* His people. Such is the double aspect of the relation of Christ to His people in His resurrection life, and consequently the double source of encouragement which they ever have in that life. He is personally with them, He gives them the Holy Spirit.

There is a mystic sense in which these two truths are reproduced in Christian experience: there is a consciousness of the presence of the Spirit, and there is a consciousness of personal communion with Christ. As an illustration of the former we may take the apostle Peter. He, as he reveals himself in his speeches and epistles, always conceives of Christ as being in the heavens, where He must remain till the restitution of all things.[4] As distinctly he conceives

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[2] Luke xxiv. 49.
[3] Acts i. 8.
[4] Acts iii. 21.

of Him as sending His Spirit for the quickening of His people.[1] The power of that Spirit he had experienced with might. In it he felt fearless before the rulers of his nation, and able to do miracles such as his Master had done. But it is always as serving a Master who is apart in the heavens that he speaks and acts. Even in those special crises of his history in which he received special guidance or deliverance, he recognizes it as a communication from his Lord in heaven to be interpreted by the Spirit,[2] or an angel sent from Him for his succour.[3] So too in his epistles he speaks of Christ as being in the heavens, at the right hand of God, to be loved without being seen,[4] to be manifested when He shall come to reward the faithful.[5]

As an illustration of the consciousness of personal communion with Christ we may take the Apostle Paul. In his history and epistles, while we have much analogous to the experience of Peter, we are more struck with the reality and frequency of his personal communion with Christ. It was by a personal revelation of Christ that he was converted.[6] When the next crisis of his life came, opening up for him a work among the Gentiles and not the Jews, it was a direct personal command from the Lord that decided him.[7] On two subsequent occasions[8] his Lord

[1] Acts ii. 33. [2] Acts xi. 5–12. [3] Acts xii. 11.
[4] 1 Pet. iii. 22. [5] 1 Pet. iv. 13, v. 1. [6] Acts xxii. 6–10.
[7] Acts xxii. 17–21, xxvi. 13–16. [8] Acts xviii. 9, xxiii. 11.

gave him the sense of His personal presence and guidance. And when the end of his life was near, when he had to answer before Cæsar, and all men forsook him, he has left the testimony: "But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."[1]

These two types of experience were not confined to these two apostles. In their own times we have Ananias who spake by direct revelation of Jesus,[2] and Agabus who spake by the Spirit.[3] Through all the ages of the Church since then to the present day, these two types of experience have been reproduced. There are some who are conscious of personal communion with Christ as real as of that with any earthly friend; and there are some who are conscious of being moved by the Spirit of God, and in the fruit of whose work the evidence of the truth of their consciousness appears.

But that is not the experience of most Christians. These are forms of mysticism, and it is not given to all believers to be mystics. The common rule for all, the rule for the Church as a whole, is, We walk by faith and not by sight.[4] We believe that Jesus is with us and that He gives the Holy Spirit. We may not each hour be conscious of His guiding hand, but in looking

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 17–18.
[2] Acts ix. 10–17.
[3] Acts xi. 28, xxi. 10–11.
[4] 2 Cor. v. 7.

back over the past we may trace His presence and guidance, whether followed or neglected. We may not realize the power of the Spirit working within us—we may be as unconscious of the growth of our spiritual life as of our natural life, but if we look back over the past we may trace a change which we can attribute only to the Spirit; or it may be that we may recall good impulses that have been stifled, and that show that the Spirit has been striving with us. And this is our encouragement for the future. We go forward to all service to which our Lord may call us, believing that He is with us and will succour us with His Spirit.

As it is with the individual Christian so it is with the Church. To her too the call is to walk by faith and not by sight. At times we may say that she has been conscious that her Lord is present with her, guiding her and opening up her way; that the Spirit has been given abundantly to her, equipping her for the service to which she has been called. But if the Church will be faithful, she must have faith that it is so, whether she is conscious of it or not: faith that Christ is with her and quickens her with His Spirit, when she seeks to do His work and carry out His commission. And looking back over the whole history of the Church, if there is one thing more evident than another it is that the living presence of Christ has been with her, reviving her when she seemed to be dead,

purifying her when she had become corrupt. In the present day we see problems arising so vast and so disturbing that it seems beyond the power of the Church to grapple with them. Those who are working for the kingdom of God are feeling that they hardly know how to combat the new forms of hostile forces that are appearing, or to guide the new forms of forces that would be helpful, if rightly guided. When such anxieties arise, let us remember that we have a living Lord, who is living to-day as well as yesterday—

> "Thine age fills all the ages,
> Undying Word of God."

He knows perfectly the spirit and the problems of this age, and He is able so to transmute that spirit for meeting those problems as to make the triumphs of this century greater than those of any previous one.

Whether we look at the work before the Church in Christian lands, or in evangelizing the vast realms of heathendom, where the task is daily becoming more arduous, we must remember that we have a Leader who lives for ever and whose work cannot fail. We must do the work not merely as those who believe that it is good, and who hope that it may be successful, but as those who own a Lord, who has authority to call them to the work and power to assure them the victory.

II. The Authority of the risen Christ

Not only life but authority is needed in one who claims obedience; and to authority the most universal the living Christ lays claim: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."[1] Such is the claim which we have now to consider. It is the ground on which He gives His Church her commission; it is the Church's warrant for seeking to carry it out.

Our Lord claims all authority in heaven. What the significance of that may be, how by His death and resurrection He won it, are themes of not unprofitable speculation, but on which we can attain no certain knowledge till we know heaven as we do earth. What it concerns us to know is that this authority is given Him, and that He has therefore the resources of heaven for establishing His authority on earth.

When we say that Christ has authority on earth, we make a general claim of lordship for Him, which we unreservedly acknowledge for ourselves, and which, we maintain, extends over all the world. To believers it seems superfluous to say anything to enforce or explain it. But we shall understand better the claim which Christ has over the world, and therefore over His people, if we look at what authority means, and at the grounds on which Christ's authority rests.

We may be helped to understand the true

[1] Matt. xxviii. 18.

meaning of *authority* by contrasting it with *power*, by which term the Authorized Version renders the Greek word. Power is non-ethical, authority is ethical. Power may be applied equally to matter or to spirit, to a steam-engine or to God. To give it ethical value it needs to be qualified by some other word, such as moral or spiritual. Into the very idea of authority two elements enter besides power, which give it ethical value, will and right.

Authority is the power of will over will. It may be defined as the right to constrain the wills of others, or the right to require obedience. Where such right exists, power must necessarily be behind it, though it may be latent. Where there are no wills to obey, no authority can be exercised; where there is no power to enforce it, the authority cannot be established. When a province has rebelled against its rightful sovereign, he may send an officer to reduce it. The officer may possibly not find one in the province who will obey him, but that does not abrogate his authority. Until all the resources of the sovereign are exhausted, his claim holds good.

The kingdom of God rests on authority, not merely on power: on authority which rules the will through the complete man, the conscience, the intellect, the affections. Anything short of that would not be worthy of God, who has made man in His own image. A religion resting on such motives as are inspired by persecution could

not be a true kingdom of God. If we could imagine Him making such a motive the basis of His kingdom, there would be a rebellion against it on the part of every enlightened and noble soul. That is practically the basis on which all earth-begotten religions rest: their motive is fear. That had come to be also the basis of the Jewish religion: it required obedience to an external law, neglect of which incurred judgment. Thus it is that while the earth is the Lord's, His kingdom is so limited even now, and at the coming of Christ was almost non-existent. The will, on the submission of which the kingdom rests, is free, and does not submit till constrained by motives which it cannot resist. Now, until Christ came no adequate motive had been presented to man. God was for the most part unknown, and where He was known His true nature was not apprehended. Some souls had arrived at a wonderful conception of His power and holiness, but the conception was never such as to sway mankind as a whole. Christ claims authority to do so, to constrain the wills of all men to obey Him, and in obeying Him to obey God—to establish God's kingdom on earth.

While He does so we must note also the limitation under which we have to consider His authority. We have not to go beyond the commission. Authority to call men to repent and to observe all things that He has commanded, authority to remit their sins, authority to send

those who own Him to carry that call to all nations, is what Christ claims; and we now proceed to consider the grounds on which His claim rests.

(1) The *Source* of Christ's authority is God. With a serene consciousness of this, He says, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."[1] These words recall teaching He had given His disciples before His passion: very specially the words in His intercessory prayer, "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world."[2] When these words fell on the ears of the apostles, they would probably think of how He had sent them forth to preach and to heal in Galilee. Meeting them after His resurrection, He changes the prayer into a command, and thus renews the old commission, but with a world-wide scope, and under the authority of Heaven.

Jesus Christ was the Missionary from heaven to earth, and all loyal souls, who acknowledge God as the supreme Ruler, will acknowledge the authority of Him whom He has sent. But Christ speaks of Himself as sent not by the Ruler, but by the Father. In doing so He gives the authority which He claims quite a different aspect. A ruler suggests one who thinks only of his own power and position, and who seeks to maintain that, at whatever cost. A father suggests one who seeks first the welfare of his

[1] John xx. 21. [2] John xvii. 18.

children, and directs all he does towards this end. When Christ says that He was sent by the Father, He leads us back to the source of His authority in what we may call the fatherly heart of the infinite God, which made it a necessity for Him to seek the welfare of His children of mankind, and when they had gone astray, to win them back.

In this He differentiates His kingdom from those of other masters. They look on God as a ruler requiring absolute obedience, how attained, whether by loyalty or terror, matters not. This is the basis of Mohammedanism, for instance: Allah is its absolute king, whom everyone must obey, or perish. The obedience which a father requires is valueless if it rests not on love. So is it with the kingdom of God: it is a Father-kingdom, and the authority of its King rests on the love of His children-subjects. This great truth had indeed been recognized by the law, as interpreted not only by Christ, but by all who had entered into its true spirit. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;" and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[1] These two commands set before us the highest ideal of religion, but at the same time there is a want in them. Love cannot come by command; the heart craves for something behind the command, which will make the duty come naturally. And this Christ effects by the substitution of a

[1] Matt. xxii. 37, 39.

single word: Thou shalt love thy Father with all thy heart, and thou shalt love thy brother as thyself. We see how the command so interpreted commends itself to heart and conscience, and how Christ secures His authority by speaking of Himself as sent by the Father.

And it is only on such a basis that "all authority" can be secured on earth. We think of a harmony to be attained in the moral and spiritual world as complete as that in the physical world, of the souls of men moving in obedience to the divine law as perfectly as the planets obey the law that guides them round the sun; and we can think of no power that will accomplish this but the power of love. Where there is perfect love of God there will be perfect obedience, and the authority of Christ will be unquestioned. It is only the love of the Father to man that can beget this love in return. The aim of the mission of Christ was to make known this love of the Father, and to draw out the love of men in return; and this too is the aim for which He has given His Church her commission.

(2) It is not only on the ground of His being sent by the Father that Christ's authority rests; it rests also and more impressively on the work that He has done. His words imply that He had done all that His Father sent Him to do, and this constitutes the attestation of His authority for us. When Joshua bestowed Hebron on Caleb, because he had wholly followed the Lord

God of Israel,[1] we may say that from that moment he had authority over Hebron. But the inhabitants did not on that account own his authority; nor did they do so till he had attacked the place and conquered its former lords.[2] So, too, the fact that the Father sent Jesus into the world gave Him authority over it; but the world could not be expected to own His authority on that ground. The world knew not God, nor Him whom He sent. It is the manner in which He has done the work given Him to do, and broken down all barriers between God and man, that has impressed on His people, and that will yet impress on all the world, the authority with which He is clothed. And to this attestation of His authority we must give special attention, for only through it are men won to own Him Lord.

(*a*) As the first element of His authority on earth we may put *His witness to the Truth.* This He gave to Pilate as the basis of His kingly authority: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."[3] And is there not in all men the capacity to know the truth, with the obligation felt to obey it? It may be latent, it may be terribly perverted, but it is there, and when it is awakened and enlightened it will assert

[1] Josh. xiv. 6–15. [2] Josh. xv. 14. [3] John xviii. 37.

its sway. Christ speaks to us as to men made in the image of God, and who are therefore able to recognize what comes from God. If He was sent forth from the Father, we may expect that the message He brings will be one that we can recognize as a Father's message, constraining us to own the authority of Him who brings it.

The power of this claim we shall see, if we contrast it with the grounds on which the Mohammedans rest the claims of the Koran. One great evidence with them is no doubt the Koran itself, the sublimity of its teaching, the eloquence of its style. But if confronted with any passage that contravenes the first principles of morality, they maintain that it is blasphemy for man to question any passage that comes with the sanction of divine revelation. They maintain practically that sin ceases to be sin if they can quote divine revelation for it. Not so is it with Christ. Besides the divine sanction, He appeals to the human sanction. He rests His authority on all that is true in man, as well as on all that is holy in God, knowing that they both must agree in one. And the practical results of this claim confirm it. The longer His teaching remains before the world, the stronger does this sanction become. The more we see the effect of His teaching in the world, the more we recognize His authority to claim our obedience; and the more confidently we call on all men to own His authority as the one perfect Teacher.

(*b*) A second element of Christ's authority is that of a *Perfect Example.* This enforces the authority of the truth which He teaches. Others have taught great truths, but have failed in authority, because their lives have been so far below their teaching. With Christ it is otherwise: we feel that He is always more than His words, that they are but transcripts of what He is and does, and that they do not fully express it all. We know what an inspiration a great example is in human affairs, and the example of Jesus stands transcendently above all others. It may seem to be so far above men as to make it hopeless for them to seek to imitate it. But there it always is behind His words, giving them authority, constraining men to own His right to teach, and to require obedience. That example remains ever an unassailable ground on which His people may press His authority on the world.

(*c*) A third element of Christ's authority is His *Suffering.* "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer,"[1] said Christ to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead. In speaking of His sufferings He feels the need of giving some more evidence of His divine mission than the mere assertion that the Father had sent Him. Divine truth, perfect example, were evidences that appealed to all men. But that One who claimed to have come from God should have to suffer as part of His mission overthrew all conceptions of the

[1] Luke xxiv. 46.

divine that had obtained in the world. The disciples, whenever their Lord spoke of His coming sufferings, either failed to understand or showed how repulsive the idea was to them.[1] Therefore, when He had triumphed over these sufferings, He does not ignore them as a thing that might now be forgotten, nor does He pass them over as an accident of His mission. He speaks of them as belonging to its very essence; and in proof thereof He quotes the things that had been written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Him.[2] These showed that His sufferings were part of the divine plan.

Of these sufferings we do not need to speak—the suffering endured through all the years of His earthly sojourn from contact with sin, not patent to the world, but not the less real on that account—the agony of His last hours, manifest to all men, which has drawn the eyes of all generations since, as to the most wonderful spectacle which the world has ever witnessed. What we have to note is the authority which that suffering has given the Sufferer. First it completes the authority of example. It shows that, in obeying the Father, He shunned no suffering in which it might involve Him. He was obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross, an example to all His followers how far they must be prepared to follow, if they would be like Him. Again, His suffering establishes

[1] Mark viii. 32. [2] Luke xxiv. 44.

the authority of love, which we have seen to be the basis of all God's authority. Men may be led in a general way to believe in the goodness of God by contemplating the ways of His providence. But so long as we can think of God only as ruling and giving of His abundance, there is nothing to carry home to the heart of man the conviction of His love for him. But when we see in Christ the revelation of a suffering God, and of a God suffering for us, we see a revelation of love which confounds the understanding and leads captive the heart. We acknowledge that One who has shown such love has a claim on our lives and our devotion which we cannot refuse without flouting the love which has endured so much for us. Thus Christ, after He had passed through His suffering, refers to it as the great work which He had accomplished according to Holy Scripture, to establish His kingdom on earth.

And the records of the kingdom show what a true source of authority for Christ this has been in the world. Christ appeals to men on all sides of their nature. His wisdom, His truth, His holiness, His power, all help to bring men into subjection to Him. But when all these have failed, the story of the cross, and of how He suffered on it for men, has won the heart, subdued the will, and constrained it to own Christ as Lord. From the biographies of believers, from the hymns of the Church, from the annals of missions, abundant proof of this

might be found. So long as the cross remains unobliterated from the world's history, so long will the authority of Him who suffered thereon remain impregnable.

(*d*) There is the authority of *Triumph*. There are men whose lives afford a stimulating example of self-devotion, but who are failures; whom even their foes must admire for their sincerity and purpose, and whom even their friends would not follow as leaders, just because they want the ability to carry their efforts forward to success. Now it might seem at first that Christ had been one of this class. Once and again, He lost His hold on the multitudes who were beginning to follow Him; and the final tragedy at Jerusalem seemed to write His life the completest failure that the world had ever seen. And so it might have been, if that had been the end. Some, who take an entirely humanitarian view of Christ, try to explain His hold on men by His sufferings alone. This is to forget that

> "behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God, within the shadow, keeping watch above His own;"

or to suppose that He has ordained suffering to be the only outcome of holiness and obedience. We instinctively feel that it cannot be so, that if He requires obedience unto death, it is that in the end He may give it its due meed of reward. And it is the triumph of Christ that

He has made it manifest how this is obtained through death, and beyond death. This was part of His teaching with regard to Himself. He never spoke of His sufferings but as a step to final triumph, of His death but as a step to His rising again. After His resurrection, He links it with His death, as an indissoluble part of the same plan: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day."[1] That was the seal of His triumph, the evidence that the eternal life that was in Him had conquered death. It was evidence, therefore, of that present life, which we have considered in the former part of this chapter, and which gives an ever present vitality to all other elements of authority.

It was this more than anything else that established the authority of Christ in the first age of the gospel. It was this that confounded the Jews of Jerusalem, who had put Christ to death, and who, seeing in the outpouring of the Spirit the evidence that He had risen, were led in thousands to believe. It was this that awakened a new life in the moribund Roman empire, and enabled those touched by it to laugh at the tortures and death which foes inflicted on them. We live now in an age dominated by materialism; but it cannot escape the awful fact of death; and as the only sure ground of hope for a life of righteousness and peace beyond, we turn to Him who has brought life and immortality to

[1] Luke xxiv. 46.

light in His resurrection from the dead. We sometimes hear of the failure of Christianity. The question is, Did Christ fail, or did He triumph? If He triumphed, then He still speaks with authority to all men, calling on those who desire to triumph likewise, to trust Him, and own Him as Lord.

(*e*) This brings us to the final element of Christ's authority, which enforces all the others, the element of *Redemption*. The teaching of the truth, the perfect example, the agonizing suffering, the glorious triumph, are not a mere spectacle which we are called on to admire, they are all designed practically for our benefit, for our salvation from sin and death; and only when they have been accepted and experienced as such is the authority of Christ fully established.

To those who have owned Jesus Christ as their Lord it may seem cold, almost heartless, to try as we have been doing, to analyse the sources of His sway over their hearts; but it is necessary if we are to do our utmost to carry out the commission which He has entrusted to us. To bring others under that sway, we must be able to present to them clearly the grounds on which we call them to submit. But when we speak as believers to believers, all these elements are merged in the infinite personality of our Lord Himself. To His love the utmost love we can show is but a faint response; com-

pared with His work for us, our best work for Him is not to be named. From the very beginning of the history of His Church this sentiment has found expression in such pleas for service as—"Ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price";[1] in such doxologies as—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."[2] Through all the ages since, these same feelings have found expression in the hymns and prayers of the Church, not as mere echoes of what has been said before, but as fresh experiences of the power of Christ. To prove this fully would exhaust the treasures of Christian hymnology.

It is to those who have thus owned His authority that He has given the commission to spread His authority throughout all nations. It is to them that He has said, "As the Father sent me, even so send I you." As the Father trusted the Son to do the work for which He was sent, so does the Son trust His people to do the work for which they are sent. The sacrifices which He made in doing His Father's behests are a constant reminder to them not to shrink from any sacrifices to which they may be called in doing His behests. His leaving heaven to sojourn on earth stands over against

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. [2] Rev. i. 5, 6.

any call that may be made on them to leave home and go to the most inhospitable climes for the gospel's sake. The contradiction of sinners against Himself, which He had to endure, makes all the dangers and privations which His messengers may have to endure among savages and heathen seem small in comparison. The pains of the cross, which He had to bear, have made the martyrs for His name feel that their sufferings were not to be named in comparison with His. Throughout all ages there have been those who have shown that the authority of Christ is unquestioned over them. And though the zeal of all who call themselves by the name of Christ is far from being worthy of the name they bear, there are still those who are ready with like devotion to those who have gone before to serve their living Lord; and through them His authority will spread till it fills all the world.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

From the Giver of the commission we turn to the receivers of the commission, the Church. It was with the resurrection that the Church was begotten. We see its beginning in the disciples gathered in the upper room, but it is some time before the name is given them. The historian calls them brethren and disciples, till they had been gathered into a company distinct from the people. After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, we are told "Great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things."[1] Here we have the body of disciples distinguished from those beyond their pale by a special name, which they retained ever after. A new fact had come into the world's history; for that fact a new name was needed, and a new name was given, that of Church. What does it mean?

We usually think of Church as opposed to state, ecclesiastical as opposed to civil. But the church—*ecclesia*—was originally a civil institution, and its place in the state will enable us to understand its meaning in the kingdom of God. The

[1] Acts v. 11.

ecclesia was an institution of the Greek states, especially of Athens. It was the assembly of all the citizens, convened or enrolled for the business of the state. The state included others, women and children, slaves and subjects, but only the free citizens were members of the *ecclesia*. When an Athenian thought of himself as a member of the *ecclesia*, he thought of himself as something more than a mere citizen, enjoying the immunities and privileges of the state; he thought of himself as having responsibilities in the state, bound to do the business that came before him as such. There were other courts and officers by which the government was carried on, but the *ecclesia* was supreme in its own sphere, and had duties which no member thought of shunning. No institution in these states had a greater educative or disciplinary effect on their citizens. Each man felt that he had his own share in the decisions, and at the same time identified his own safety and happiness with the vote of the majority.[1] Carrying this conception into the kingdom of God, we get as the primary idea of the Church—the whole body of the members of that kingdom enrolled for the business of the kingdom. Let us now turn to the actual beginning of the Church and see how that idea is embodied.

It would be interesting to trace how the conception of a Church is seen struggling through the history of Israel, but it will serve

[1] See Grote's *Hist. of Greece*, chap. xxvi.

our purpose better to begin with the foundations as laid by Jesus Christ. He first taught the true nature of the kingdom of God, that it rested not on natural birth, but on birth from above;[1] and He called and trained those who were to be citizens in that kingdom. The spirituality of His teaching, contrasting with the formality of the Jews, made an ever widening breach between them on the one hand, and Himself and His disciples on the other—the beginning of the distinction between the Church and the world. The issue became definite when Peter made the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This was the anathema of the Jews, and led to their crucifying Christ; it was the faith of His disciples, and the foundation of His Church. "Thou art Peter (*petros*)," said Jesus, "and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church."[2] It was not on Peter alone that the Church was to rest, nor on the confession of Peter alone, but on the confession as embodied in Peter,—not on any man nor on any creed, but on the faith expressed in the creed embodied in human life.

On the eve of the crucifixion, in the farewell words of Jesus to His apostles, we get a revelation of the position of the nascent Church as it appeared to Him. He draws sharply the distinction between them and the world: "Ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world."[3] One consequence of this was: "There-

[1] John iii. 3–5. [2] Matt. xvi. 16–18. [3] John xv. 19.

fore the world hateth you."[1] In His intercessory prayer He draws the same distinction: "I pray not for the world, but for those that thou hast given me."[2] He looked on the solitary position in which they were to be without Him, and prayed not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil: that they might be sanctified for the work for which they were sent into the world. One other trait there is to complete the picture: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word."[3] This interprets the saying, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Those who believed through the word of Peter and the other apostles were included in Christ's prayer. Thus He thought of His Church as extending to all the multitudes who should believe through all ages, in all lands.

From these sayings we may gather the character of the Church, the new community which was to take the place of the Jewish nation as the representative of God's kingdom on the earth. The distinction is drawn, not between the disciples of Jesus and the Jews, but between them and the world. The universal had already taken the place of the particular in the mind of Christ. It was only the Jews, whose hatred He and His disciples had experienced; but for Him the Jews were now the representatives not of the kingdom of God, but of the world that was at

[1] John xv. 18. [2] John xvii. 9. [3] John xvii. 20.

enmity with Him and His kingdom. It was out of the world as such that His disciples were chosen, and thus there was opened up the possibility of their being chosen out of all nations of the world. They were to form a community, membership of which depended on faith in Him, a community to be perpetuated, not by hereditary descent or national absorption, but by the word of those who had already entered it.

Such was the Church as it appeared to its Divine Founder on the eve of His decease. It was still in embryo; the Jewish nation had still the position of God's kingdom on earth. When He appeared among His disciples in the upper room on the evening of the resurrection day, all had been changed. To outward appearance the Jewish nation was still God's kingdom on earth, but in view of eternity it had been cast out from that position. And what was to take its place? Just that small band of disciples that had believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. A poor substitute they seemed for the great nation, with its splendid organization, that had been rejected. But few as they were they had one qualification, which the Jews never had, that fitted them for spreading through the earth, and winning all nations to God: they were emancipated from bondage to the flesh. They were free from all limitations of race and place. They could go among all the nations and ask them to enter the kingdom of God on the same terms as they them-

selves had done—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such were the members of the infant Church.

We have seen further that the true meaning of the Church—*ecclesia*—is not only the gathering of the citizens of the kingdom, but these citizens gathered for the business and service of the kingdom. And in the Church of the upper room, from the moment of her coming into existence, this condition of her existence was declared to her by her Lord. He had entered on His eternal life, His Church was now entering on her eternal life. His life was to manifest itself in the service He was to continue to perform for His Church; her life was to manifest itself in the service she was to perform for Him. And no sooner did He manifest Himself in His new life than He gave His disciples that great commission which is the Church's warrant for her work, we may almost say for her very existence. The study of this commission will occupy us presently; meanwhile we may note that its main features are witnessing for Christ, spreading His gospel, winning the nations to faith in Him.

This enables us to say what the true Church is. It is (*a*) the company of believers in Christ, (*b*) engaged in the service of His kingdom. Where these two elements exist we have the true living Church of Jesus Christ; where they are wanting, whatever else there may be, the Church is not there. Developments soon began to take place. The Church had to organize herself for

her work. She seems to have done so on the model of the civil or social organizations of the lands in which she was established. These forms have come to be raised by many to a place of undue importance, and to occupy in their minds the place due to the essentials alone. If we wish to know what is vital to the Church, we must go back beyond the most ancient of all these organizations to the Church of the upper room, the Church of the resurrection; and there we find these two features, faith in Christ and service of Him. I therefore do not propose to say anything on questions of Church constitution, but only on the relation of the Church to the great commission, the carrying out of which is the condition of her very existence.

The first point to notice is that the commission was given to the whole band of disciples. In studying the records of the various occasions on which the commission was given, we have seen that on all of them, there is reason to believe, on some of them certainly, others besides the apostles were present. The commission was given to them all: no exception was made by our Lord. The obligation was laid on the most obscure of that band of disciples as well as on the chiefest of the apostles, and he was to the extent of his ability and opportunities as responsible as they. At the same time, the obligation was laid on the entire band of disciples, on the Church as a whole. They were not yet organized for work,

but they were possessed of unity, the only unity that has continued permanent since, the unity of faith and of spirit, which gathered the responsibilities of the individual disciples into the responsibility of the whole, and laid on them the obligation of acting unitedly, as well as individually, in the work their Lord had given them to do. It was some time before the disciples recognized the obligation resting on them as a Church to seek the conversion of the nations, and it was only through a terrible discipline that they were taught. The history of this evolution is one of the most interesting episodes of apostolic times.

When the disciples received their pentecostal baptism, they at once began to carry out the commission and to bear witness to Christ. The power and success with which they did so are well known: a Church numbering thousands was gathered, the wants of the poor were provided for by liberality such as the world had never seen, the love and faith of the disciples were manifest to all. But it was only in Jerusalem they bore witness; for Samaria and the regions beyond they did nothing. We must not suppose that this was owing to any forgetfulness or conscious neglect of their Lord's universal command. The only way they could as yet conceive of its being carried out was just that to which as Jews they had been accustomed. Jewish proselytism had been carried on by those Jews who had gone for business or other such purposes to settle in various lands, and

who sought in them to disseminate the Jewish faith. The idea of men being set apart and going to other lands solely for the purpose of spreading religion had not yet risen on the world. When Christ gave the new command, He did not appoint any methods, but left His followers to learn by experience and by the Spirit what methods were needful. He bade them begin at Jerusalem: they began at Jerusalem, and awaited the guidance of providence to lead believers in ordinary course to other lands, where they might bear the same witness as in Jerusalem. As they were thus waiting on providence, God in His providence drove them forth by a terrible persecution, which scattered them to the four winds of heaven.

This persecution tested the faith of the first disciples, and they were not found wanting. While some failed, the great majority remained steadfast. They preferred to flee from Jerusalem rather than deny Christ; and wherever they went the same faith led them to confess Christ and to preach Him. Thus it was this terrible persecution that first forced the expansion of the Church. It was the Lord of the harvest thrusting forth labourers into His harvest. They that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word,[1] compelled to do by chastisement what they had not done from obedience. All that was done in the way of spreading the gospel during this period was done by individual

[1] Acts viii. 4.

believers. The Church as such undertook no initiative, and gave no direction. All that she did was to send deputations to confirm and build up the churches that were gathered by these disciples—these private members of the Church. The only one regarding whose work we have any details is Philip,[1] and he had a recognized place in the Church as a deacon.[2] We have also the details given of an individual advance made by Peter, when he was directed to open the door of the Church to the Gentiles by baptizing the household of Cornelius.[3] We can see the reason for the mention of these two cases. The former signalized the admission to the Church of the Samaritans, the second the admission of the whole Gentile world. But we feel, as we read the record, that these were only instances in the great aggressive work of the Church that was being prosecuted by all the believers. Wherever they were driven or went of their own accord, wherever God's providence opened up an opportunity for them, and they found men willing to listen, they preached the gospel.

Among those who were thus carrying out the commission of the Lord were some who came to Antioch, and there spoke not to Jews or proselytes only, but also to Greeks.[4] It is not likely that they had heard of Peter's admitting the Gentiles; more probably they acted solely under the guidance of the Spirit in view of the openings

[1] Acts viii. 5–13, 26–40.
[2] Acts vi. 5.
[3] Acts x.
[4] Acts xi. 19–22.

that God gave them. As the result of their speaking, many believed and were received into the number of the disciples. When the news of this came to the church in Jerusalem, they acted on what seems to have been their usual practice: they sent a representative, and the one they sent on this occasion was Barnabas. He was not one of the apostles: he was one who by his faith and life had attained a position of trust and authority in the church, and he went with its authority to examine the state of affairs in Antioch. He was pleased with what he saw, and helped further to build up the church there.

In this first period, then, of the Church's expansion, we see that nearly all the aggressive work, the active fulfilment of Christ's commission, was accomplished by private members, acting on their own initiative, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and of God's providential dealings with them. The apostles seem to have taken it for granted that all such work was to be done by the general body of the disciples, while their function was to follow up their work, giving them the guidance they needed, and building up the churches which they gathered.[1]

Though we have no positive statement on the subject, yet all the evidence we have shows that the preaching of the word was always accompanied by baptism. We know that Philip baptized the believers in Samaria, but as he was an ordained minister of the Church, we may not conclude so

[1] Acts viii. 14–17, xi. 22–24.

much from him. Those who founded the church at Antioch, however, were certainly ordinary members of the Church, having no position above the other disciples. Barnabas was the first who came with official authority ; but he did not baptize the converts : all that he did was to exhort them as those who had already entered fully into the fellowship of the Church. We may conclude, then, that in this first and most triumphant advance of the gospel beyond Jerusalem, all the members of the Church believed that to them was given the commission to preach the gospel and to baptize those who confessed Christ ; while the Church as a whole, leaving the initiative to individuals, followed up their work by sending men to confirm the converts and give them further instruction. Amid all the developments and changes that have taken place in the attitude of the Church to her Lord's great commission, we must never lose sight of the work of these first disciples, and of the authority which their example has for all succeeding ages.

But the Church had not yet arrived at a consciousness of her missionary vocation. The discipline through which she had come had revealed to her how her Lord's commission might be fulfilled, the means by which the gospel might be spread : it had not yet taught her the obligation of spreading the gospel by these means. It is generally in the pause and rest after a period of trial and stress that the lessons of the

trial are gathered. So it was on this occasion, and it was in the church in Antioch that the lesson was learned.[1] There were in that church prophets and teachers, men of high spiritual vision and knowledge, the ministers of the church there. And we read that they and, we may presume, the church along with them, fasted. Why should they fast? It was evidently not one of the ordinary Jewish fasts. It was one of those fasts to which men give themselves when face to face with a problem which they cannot solve, and for which their only hope is in divine guidance. And, looking back on the situation, we can understand the question which the Church had to face. A great crisis had come: her growth had ceased. She had come through her first conflict and had achieved her first conquests. Persecution had burst on the church at Jerusalem and had apparently wiped it out. But from this apparent disaster had come those first triumphs, which she had won almost in spite of herself, which revealed to her the power that was within her, and showed her that the commission of her Lord was one that might be fulfilled, and that He meant her to fulfil. Instead of one church in Jerusalem, there were now churches in Judæa and Galilee, in Samaria and among the Gentiles. And then the advance had stopped. Persecution had ceased: the disciples began to return to Jerusalem, or those who had been driven forth

[1] Acts xiii. 1–3.

reached their limits, and the aggressive movement was arrested. The churches in the lands already reached had rest, were edified, and multiplied—a very desirable and necessary thing. But no new lands were being entered, no new conquests were being made. This could not satisfy men who had experienced the power their Lord had given them, and who had the vision of the extension of His kingdom among all the kingdoms of the earth. There was evidently something wrong, and they set themselves with prayer and fasting to learn what it was.

To men so engaged the revelation could not but come sooner or later. It was the unfaithfulness of the Church that had paralysed her advance. She had never yet sought fully to carry out her Lord's great commission. The progress made had been achieved in spite of her supineness, not in consequence of her zeal. The conquests won had been won by disciples who had gone forth not from the desire to spread Christ's kingdom, but from the desire to escape persecution. When the motive had ceased, the movement had ceased also. Some might be inclined to say that they would need a fresh persecution before they could have a fresh advance. But there was a more excellent way—that the Church should make the advance from loyalty to her Lord, and not from fear of man—that the commission given by Him required her to give her commission not only to men appointed to build up those already converted, but also to

men appointed to carry on aggressive work, and to make Christ known to all nations.

Among those who were thus engaged was the man who had been the chief agent in the persecution, Saul of Tarsus. We cannot but think that it would be impressed on him how God had overruled his wrath for the spread of the faith which he had persecuted and which he now accepted, and that he felt therein a call to work for its wider spread. He would remember, too, how at his conversion, and subsequently in Jerusalem, the Lord had told him that he was to go among the Gentiles.[1] And in the midst of the fast in which he was engaged, and the crisis which occasioned it, the Holy Spirit, working on all these thoughts, showed him that now was the time to begin the fulfilment of his high vocation. Along with him was Barnabas, who all along had shown sympathy with him and stood by him. We can imagine how these two conferred together, and found that they both had the same call to go to the regions beyond; how they spoke to the other leaders of the Church, and they too were brought into full sympathy; and the Holy Spirit impressed on them that these two were

[1] The circumstances of his training in Tarsus university may have helped to give direction to his thoughts. "Tarsus seems to have been a missionary university. It sent its scholars all over the empire as missionaries of culture. May not this fact have appealed to Paul? May it not even have wakened in him a desire to emulate the zeal and enterprise of the secular teachers?"—HERBERT T. ANDREWS, in review of Ramsay's "Cities of St. Paul," *British Weekly*, 9th January 1908.

the instruments appointed for solving the problem of evangelizing the nations. The whole matter is summed up in its essentials by the historian: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." The Holy Ghost had called the workers, He bade the Church consecrate them to the work—the essentials of every true missionary ordination since. They fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, and sent them away. The historian adds that they went, "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Those who had gone forth from Jerusalem had been driven forth by the sword: those who went forth from Antioch were sent by the Holy Ghost.

What was signified by the laying on of hands? I do not say anything but on this one point: it signified that the Church gave them her commission. Christ had given the Church His commission, and under it, as we have seen, had given the commission to each member to witness and work for Him. Now the Church gave to these two her commission to make Christ known in lands to which her ordinary members could not go. As Christ in giving the Church His commission had pledged Himself to be always with her and to sustain her in carrying it out, so the Church in giving her commission to her missionaries pledges herself to sustain them in carrying it out. In sending out these first missionaries, all that the Church seems to have given was her prayers. It was a self-supporting mission. Barnabas was a man of means; Paul

was a skilled artizan, and supported himself wherever he went. But when necessity arose, those churches that felt the responsibility and the privilege sent to minister to their necessities.[1]

And how did this sub-commission of the Church work along with the supreme commission of Christ and the efforts of individual members to carry it out? Did it act as a soporific, making them think that as they were now carrying out the commission vicariously, they did not need to do anything personally? Or did it make them feel that there was a wider work for them than ever? The latter seems to have been the first effect. The missionaries of the Church led the way, gathered disciples in the chief centres of the lands they visited, founded churches there, and left them to carry on the work of making Christ known in their respective districts, through the individual believers. We have no direct evidence that this was the case, probably because Luke did not think it necessary to tell what seemed to him a matter of course; but we have incidental evidence that the converts of these churches were active in spreading the gospel which they had accepted. Thus Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, thanks God that through them the gospel had sounded forth through Macedonia and Achaia.[2] Demetrius in his address to the silversmiths at Ephesus bears unconscious witness to the evangelistic activity of the converts there, when he says that not only

[1] Phil. iv. 15–16. [2] 1 Thess. i. 8.

at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, Paul had persuaded and turned away much people.[1]

Thus, as the curtain falls on the history of the early Church, we see her setting apart her best men to carry the gospel among the heathen, and her members forward to commend the same gospel within their own spheres. Defects and dissensions were beginning to appear, but there was in her the spirit of an onward movement: leaders ready to go to the uttermost parts of the earth, followers ready to work along with them and to face persecution and death, in bearing witness to Christ and in spreading His gospel.

Passing over eighteen centuries, and seeking to apply the lessons of the primitive Church to the Church of to-day, the first difficulty we are met with is that instead of one Church we seem to have numbers of churches. On the various causes which have produced these I do not enter. Behind all we may see one great unity. I believe that in the two great tests of a Church, a union of (*a*) believers in Christ, (*b*) engaged in the work of His kingdom, we may see that all these churches are the offspring of the Church of the upper room; and the conditions of life and prosperity are the same for them as for it.

And the first lesson to be learned from it is that it is only in carrying out the great commission of her Lord that any church can prosper.

[1] Acts xix. 26.

Neglect of the one will bring judgment on the other. It is true that the judgment does not come now by terrible persecution, as it did on the Church in Jerusalem. That was needful as a means of leading the Church to a knowledge of her mission and her power. That instruction once given did not need to be repeated. Failure in the duty thereafter was not the result of ignorance but of disloyalty, and brought the necessary penalty of disloyalty in spiritual decay and death. A church which is unfaithful to Christ's commission nowadays need not fear persecution. More probably she will be at ease and increased in worldly goods, but almost certainly she will be a dead church. Now, among large sections of the churches there is an ignoring of the permanent obligation of the commission. This is not so general as it once was. The Reformers were inclined to look on Christ's command as for the apostles and first Christians alone, considering that since then God had by His providence showed that He did not mean the command to be binding on all ages. And the spiritual blight which soon fell on the Protestant churches was a judgment on this unfaithfulness.

Though there are none who now openly maintain this position, its influence is still largely felt, and hinders the activity of the Church. More frequently the argument put forward by those who deny the world-wide obligation of the Church is, that other races have religions better suited for them, and that it is wiser, and more consistent

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with what they are pleased to term the true spirit of Christianity, to leave them to the religions in which they have been born. No one who acknowledges Christ as his living Lord can allow this contention. He gives no limitation of time for the carrying out of His commission, but He does prescribe the extent to which it is to be done. The latter is the guide for the Church, and until it is overtaken, until all the nations of the earth have been discipled, the Church may not withdraw her hand from the task allotted her. The work in the past has, no doubt, been sorely limited, and we see such limitations even in the apostolic Church—limitations of human weakness—limitations, too, of want of faithfulness. But the purpose of the Master is not to be thwarted by the frailty and unfaithfulness of His servants. So long as He lives He will continue to raise new workers to accomplish it. Only when He Himself fails or when His great purpose is accomplished, will there be discharge to His people from the warfare to which He summons them. Can anyone doubt that if He were to appear in any gathering of His people now, He would address to them the same words as He addressed to them on the day of His resurrection? The obligation is resting on us now as truly as on the disciples in the upper room. We can be freed from it only by disowning Christ.

A second lesson for the churches of to-day is,

that the carrying out of the commission is the work of the individual member as well as of the Church as a whole. If we trace the history of the great missionary revival which has now been going on for more than a century, we shall see that in the first instance it was an individual not a church movement. The small Moravian church indeed had from the beginning of the eighteenth century set before the world the perfect ideal, as it had been realized at Antioch, the commission being recognized as binding both on individual believers and on the Church as a whole. When their example began to awaken the Christian conscience beyond themselves, it was on individuals that it worked. Missionary associations were formed outside the churches, and had at first to encounter their coldness and even hostility. That has happily now passed, and few will be found to deny that the extension of the kingdom of God throughout the earth is the great purpose of the Christian Church, which she cannot neglect without unfaithfulness to her living Lord. The Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal churches at all events take up foreign missions as part of the work of the Church, under the control of the church courts. Connected with all the other churches there are missionary societies, which are equally effective in making foreign missions part of the work of these churches. So that we may say that the obligation of the Church as such to carry out the commission of her Lord is recognized.

While the churches are thus alive to their

obligation, there is a want of power in their efforts to discharge it which prevents the progress that might be expected. Many explanations are given of this weakness, with none of which do I propose to deal, save with one that is, I believe, the kernel of the whole. It is this, that while the obligation on the Church is recognized, the obligation on the individual member is not recognized. And this tells both at home and on the mission field.

If we analyse the authority which Christ has in most of our churches, in so far at least as work for His cause is concerned, we shall find that it resolves itself into the authority of the Church. The members feel that they are connected with a community for whose efficiency they are in a measure responsible, both by their connection with it and by loyalty to the great Head of the Church, faith in whom is their bond of union with it. When the Church undertakes any work for the kingdom of God, they feel themselves bound to support it. When the work is work at one's own door, and it is there that the commission begins, there is a call for personal service. Until the members of the Church at home realize that they have a personal commission to work for Christ, the Church will never be able to cope with the problems confronting her at home. But generally the support which members feel called on to give the Church's work is contributing to the funds necessary for it, and praying for a blessing on it. This is nearly all that the

ordinary church member can do for the work in heathen lands. If this were done from a sense of personal obligation to obey the commission of a living Lord, and as being all that He gives opportunity for doing, it would give a real spiritual force to the Church's work. More generally what is thus given is given as an acknowledgment of the claim which the Church has on the pecuniary support of her members, and as a discharge of all further obligation. The weakness of this ideal is seen when these members are brought into a position in which they might do more. There are many who by their business or professional engagements are required to go to heathen lands. In all the relations of life they act according to the Christian rule, but they never seem to think that there is any call to them to witness for Christ to those among whom they are. They acknowledge that this work is entrusted by Christ to His Church and that they must support it, but they do not realize that Christ has given *them* a commission to be His witnesses. They think that the holy war is to be fought by the officers alone, not by the rank and file of the Christian host.

Thus the surest guarantee for the support of foreign missions, and for leading those who go abroad to do their part in the work, is to seek the full conversion of all the members of our churches, to bring them to acknowledge the authority of Christ as fully as did the disciples to whom Christ first gave the commission.

When we shall see modern Christians as ready to bear witness to Christ wherever they go as were these first disciples, we shall see a spread of His kingdom far beyond anything that is now to be seen.

There are many individual Christians who do fully recognize this obligation; and there are some who, feeling the inadequacy of the methods employed under the regular Church organizations, have felt the call of the Spirit to carry on work independent of them. Some results of this we see in such missions as the *China Inland* Mission and the *Regions Beyond* Mission. These are looked on with jealousy by some of the churches, as diverting a portion of the funds which they need, and the absence of which cripples their efforts. But we must look on them as tokens of Christ's Spirit enforcing Christ's commission among His people, and drawing forth men and means, which the churches have hitherto failed to reach. They are taking their part in the work of the great, invisible, catholic Church of Christ, beyond those visible organizations through which she generally works. The churches should mark them, learn the lessons which they teach, combine their methods with those which they themselves follow, and seek to call out more fully the spirit within their own borders which has found outlet in these efforts outside of them. We have not yet reached finality in our missionary methods, and we may hope that by the guidance of God's Spirit all these

methods will be brought into harmony, and the Church in the unity as well as in the power of the Spirit, owning the call to herself and to each one of her members, will go forth to the conquest of all lands.

In the mission field the problem of the relation of the commission to the Church as a whole and to the individual presents itself under a somewhat different aspect. The work there is more exactly analogous to the work carried on by Paul in his missionary tours. As in his case it was through his converts that the great extension of the gospel took place in the lands he visited, so in our mission fields it is by the native converts, the native Church, that we hope that these lands will be won to Christ. The aim of all missions is to raise up such an aggressive native Church, which will feel herself charged with Christ's commission for the land in which she is. I do not, however, enter further on this subject here, as anything I have to say will come more appropriately when considering the methods of carrying out the commission.

CHAPTER VI

THE RESURRECTION NAME OF GOD

"The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"[1] is the name of God which Christ revealed to His disciples when He gave them their great commission. It was a new name, given then for the first time, for earlier it could not have been given. It crystallized an eternal truth, of which intimations had been heard in the revelation to Israel, which had in its elements been taught explicitly by our Lord Himself, but to which He did not give definite and authoritative expression till by His death and resurrection it had been woven into the web of human history.

It would be interesting to trace the intimations of this great truth in the Old Testament: how some earnest souls rose to the conception of Jehovah as the Father of His people; how they felt the need of mediation with Him through angels or through the Word of the Lord; how prophets felt the power of the Spirit, and poets clung to communion with God, through the indwelling of His Spirit. These are fully

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19.

treated in works on the Trinity, but are not so needful here. They are foreshadowings of truths which Christ has fully revealed, and to which we now turn.

Here we look first at His revelation of the Son. He *was* the Son, and as the Son He revealed the Father. We notice, then, that in the words of Christ none of the sanctions which we find in the Old Testament are adduced. We never read that the word of God came to Him as it did to the prophets of old: He speaks as Himself the Word. He never speaks of an angel coming to redeem His people, as Moses did in the wilderness: He is Himself the Redeemer, who will ransom them and be their Saviour.[1] He is not mediated; He is the Mediator.

And it is because He is the Son that He is Mediator.[2] By Son I do not mean merely Son of God, but also Son of man. It is not the question as to whether there may have been from all eternity a Son of God in heaven, but whether the Son of God became Son of man in Jesus of Nazareth. The former alone is a mere speculative question; the latter is one on which the salvation of the world depends. When Jesus bade His disciples baptize the nations into the name of the Son, we can have no doubt that He meant into His own name, as He was manifested in the flesh; for that gave the evidence that God was a Father to

[1] Matt. xx. 28; John x. 15–18. [2] John v. 27; Heb. ii. 14.

men, and that men might rise to be sons of God. Jesus does not categorically claim to be the Son of God, any more than He claims to be Son of man. But when He speaks of Himself as Son of man, we can see that He is conscious that He is Son of man; and when He speaks of Himself, or allows others to speak of Him as Son of God, we can see equally that He is calmly conscious that He is the Son of God.

He did not at first call Himself so. He was so called by the voice from heaven at His baptism,[1] and on the mount of Transfiguration,[2] by Satan when he tempted Him in the wilderness,[3] and by demons when He cast them out.[4] Among men He allowed the fact of His divinity to bear witness for itself. It was a truth that dawned slowly on His apostles, but at last forced itself on their conviction. When Peter, answering for the others, declared his faith in Him as the Christ the Son of God, it was joyfully accepted by his Master as evidence that he had received revelation from on high.[5] He was careful not to allow the knowledge of His claim to come before the world prematurely,[6] for He knew what the result would be. But it forced itself on the attention of His foes. They accused Him of making Himself equal with God, because

[1] Matt. iii. 17, etc. [2] Matt. xvii. 5. [3] Matt. iv. 3.
[4] Mark v. 6, 7; Luke iv. 41. [5] Matt. xvi. 16, 17.
[6] Matt. xvi. 20; Luke iv. 41.

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He called God His Father. They saw that He did not claim to be the Son of God in the same way that other men might claim it; and Jesus, while pointing to the general truth in reply, was careful to maintain the speciality of His own position.[1] When at last He was brought before the council, and forced either to avow or abandon His claim, He avowed Himself solemnly to be the Son of God.[2] And the result which He anticipated took place: He was condemned to die. He witnessed with His life that He was the Son of God.

And it was just the result that seemed to disprove His claim. It was inconceivable to His countrymen that the Son of God should die on the cross. There seemed to be even among His persecutors an uneasy feeling that ere the end there might be some deliverance, or that He might save Himself.[3] When no deliverance appeared, they felt sure that they had disproved His claim, and taunted Him with it in His dying hours. In the supreme test He seemed to have failed. His disciples must have felt for the moment that the foundations of their faith were gone. Let us too acknowledge that if the story of Christ had ended with the cross, His claim to be the Son of God could not be maintained. At the same time the test was so supreme that His claim, if it stood the test, would be established for ever.

[1] John x. 30–38. [2] Matt. xxvi. 63–64. [3] Matt. xxvii. 42, 43.

Christ's revelation of the Father was different from His revelation of the Son. He could not bring the Father before the eyes of men as He did the Son. It is the Fatherhood of God that He reveals, and He does it through His own Sonhood. He does not so much directly teach that God is the Father in heaven as He takes it for granted, and speaks and acts as though that were the dominant fact in His life, and ought to be the same in the lives of all men. His first recorded words, spoken while He was still a boy, show that it had already filled His mind—"Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"[1] He taught His disciples to pray to God as to their Father in heaven, to trust Him as such, to live constantly as in His presence.[2] And He taught this still more by example. He always did His Father's will, sought His honour, trusted His care. This, it may be said, showed the filial spirit in perfection, but except that such a soul as Jesus trusted God as Father, there is in it no evidence of the Fatherhood: we need to see the response of God. And Jesus gave the experience of His life as that response. He seemed to place it before men, and to challenge them to say whether a life of dependence on the Father was not the true life for man; whether His Father did not supply Him with all that was needful for Him, and enable Him to live, even amid

[1] Luke ii. 49. [2] Matt. vi., etc.

the contradiction of His foes, with the calmness and joy that comes from the presence of an omnipotent Guardian. This is but the sublimation of the ordinary experience of mankind. In the care of us which God manifests in His providence, in the daily gifts He bestows on us, in the happiness He gives us to enjoy, we have evidences of His Fatherhood, which all men may read.

If this had been the only experience of mankind, if every life had been filled with plenty and with joy, the Fatherhood of God might never have been questioned. But there is also in human experience sorrow, suffering, and death. Much of this may be explained as Fatherly discipline; but there is also much that cannot be so explained, much that seems the cruellest injustice, and that would drive us to say that, if God be a Father, He is no better than the severest of tyrants. This it is that seems to disprove the Fatherhood of God. And at the close of Christ's life too—and this we must remember, if we would understand the full significance of the Name into which He bade His disciples baptize the nations — the event seemed to disprove all His teaching and example with regard to that great truth. At the last God gave Him up to the most painful, most ignominious, most iniquitous of deaths. In the midst of the terrible agony He seemed to lose sight of God as His Father, and to see only a God who had for-

saken Him.[1] And though the cloud passed, and it was with the name of Father on His lips that He yielded up the spirit,[2] that was only evidence that to the end the filial spirit remained undimmed, and He was conscious that God was His Father. But where was the response that showed that He had a Father in heaven? What was the only conclusion to which the world could come? It was expressed in the words of the chief priests before the cross: "He trusteth on God: let him deliver him now, if he desireth him; for he said, I am the Son of God."[3] This was a taunt, but it was also a test which they were applying, and which the world would necessarily apply, to Christ's claim that God was His Father. Let us realize the conclusion that became inevitable at the cross, and that could never have been shaken, if death had been the end: that God was not the Father of Jesus Christ, and if not His Father, then not the Father of any man. Tested by His supreme case, the Fatherhood of God had failed. But on this side too, as on the side of the Sonhood, the test was so supreme, that the truth, if it should stand, would be established for ever.

The teaching of Christ with regard to the Holy Spirit was somewhat different from that with regard to the Father and Himself. He spoke of the Spirit as a Paraclete, who was to

[1] Matt. xxvii. 46. [2] Luke xxiii. 46. [3] Matt. xxvii. 43.

come after He had gone.[1] A natural enough explanation of this would be that the Paraclete was to come after He died; and consequently His death might seem rather a condition of the fulfilment of the promise than an event that would frustrate it. If we look more carefully, however, we shall see that the death of Christ, standing alone, would have destroyed all hope of the gift of the Spirit. Just as He embodied in Himself the Sonhood and thereby revealed the Fatherhood, so He embodied and thereby revealed the Holy Spirit. It came on Him in full measure at the beginning of His ministry; He was conscious that He possessed it; the life of His whole ministry was a life of the Spirit, and it was in virtue of that life that He could give the Spirit. If the Holy Spirit could not preserve Him from death, He could not claim that it was anything more than the spirit of man, and He could not give it to others. His life was a condition of the Spirit being given to His disciples as much as His departure from them; His death on the cross seemed, therefore, fatal to the fulfilment of His promise. If there had been nothing beyond the tomb, the Holy Spirit would have been lost to mankind as much as the Father in heaven or the Incarnate Son.

Thus for the moment it seemed that all the teaching of Jesus with regard to the divine

[1] John xvi. 7.

nature had been belied by His death; that the Fatherhood of God had been disproved, that the Sonhood of the Christ had been disproved, that the possibility of the gift of the Holy Spirit had been disproved. Man, whatever he might think of God, could never look up to Him as a Father in heaven; whatever he might think of the Christ, he could not think of Him as a divine Brother, a living Saviour; whatever strength for duty he might have, he could never hope for the divine Spirit to make him a partaker of the divine nature. If it had not been that Jesus embodied, and claimed to embody, these great truths in Himself, His death would not have been so fatal for them. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;[1] and when He was laid dead in the tomb, all hope for man having a Father in heaven, a divine Spirit within him, as well as a divine Brother Man to be his Saviour, lay dead also. Let us try to realize that for three days in the history of the world this awful darkness of death rested on mankind, and let us try to imagine what it would have meant if it had been eternal.

But the resurrection came, and changed the "everlasting nay" into the "everlasting yea." It showed that the truths which Jesus had taught were no mere imaginings, but realities which the very assault of death showed to be eternal and immovable. It vindicated the trust which the Son had ever shown in the Father that He would

[1] Col. ii. 9.

deliver Him even when the last enemy had gained its last triumph over Him. The divine Fatherhood, the divine Sonhood were both eternally established. It showed that the divine Spirit that was in Him could quicken His mortal body with a life fit for the eternal state, and for giving that life to others. Man could henceforth look with full assurance to the Father in heaven as his Father, who through the discipline of life and the alembic of death was preparing him for brighter manifestations of His Fatherly love in heaven. He could look to the divine Son as a brother of his humanity, living eternally with all His human experience, a Mediator with the Father, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him. To the disciples there came at the resurrection the renewed promise, and since Pentecost to all believers has come the experience, of the Holy Spirit, a Companion ever with them, to enlighten, purify, and strengthen them. It was just then, when all this had been achieved, that Christ gave to His disciples the name of God, which embodies its achievement, "The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." That had been potentially His name from the time that man had needed a Saviour-God, but Christ did not give it till by His death and resurrection it had been made the inalienable possession of mankind.

This name, given at the beginning of the history of the Christian Church, we may compare

with that given at the beginning of the history of Israel. When God sent Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, He revealed His name as "I AM,"[1] which for those who spake of Him became JEHOVAH, He who is. This was the name of the God of Israel, by whose worship they were distinguished from the other nations of the earth. This name came to be regarded with special awe by the people of Israel. It was considered profane even to pronounce it, and its vocalization was changed, so that its true pronunciation is now a matter of conjecture. For the Christian Church the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is as sacred as that of Jehovah for the Jews, but we do not show our reverence for it by concealing it. It is proclaimed at every service, glorified in every doxology, invoked in every benediction. While it is so, we do not forget the name of the Holy One of Israel; we conjoin it with the name which Christ revealed:—

> "Holy, Holy, Holy, Thee,
> One Jehovah evermore,
> Father, Son, and Spirit, we,
> Dust and ashes, would adore."

And equally do we join the signification of the two names. Each was peculiarly suitable for the occasion on which it was given. Moses was sent to call the children of Israel out of Egypt, that they might be a witness to the one true God, in the midst of powerful nations, given up to the

[1] Ex. iii. 14.

worship of false gods, which were looked on as integral parts of their national existence. It was needful, therefore, to impress on them that the God who called them was the eternally existent One, who was before the nations of the earth came into being, and who would be after they had passed, the one true God beside whom there was no other. It took generations of discipline to write this great truth on the heart of Israel, but at last it came to be indelibly engraven there. The creed for which every true Israelite is ready to die is, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah thy God is one Jehovah."[1]

The mission of Christ was different from that of Moses. It was not to separate one nation as holy in the midst of idolatrous nations; it was to win these nations to faith in the God of Israel. So when He sent His disciples forth on the great commission, He gave them a name of God, which by its earthly analogies would impress on men that His relations to them were the nearest and most loving possible, would teach them to believe in a God who fully met every true spiritual aspiration they might feel.

There is a tendency to ignore this great name in the practical work of the Church both at home and abroad. Some speak as though it were more a hindrance than a help to Christianity, and stood in the way of its acceptance by many, who are attracted by the character and teaching of

[1] Deut. vi. 4.

Jesus Christ. And if we mean by accepting this name accepting any of the metaphysical theories that have been woven around it, they are right. But we must remember that Christ gave it as the name to which and by which the world was to be won, and we need not hope for victory in any other. And if we keep in view what the name stands for, we shall see that it is not a mere speculative idea, but an intensely practical view of God. A man may come to God and obtain salvation without knowing or thinking of the name which Christ revealed, but unless he comes in the spirit which responds to that name, he cannot.

We may be helped to understand this by the analogy of the human trinity. Man has a tripartite nature—body, soul, and spirit.[1] This is not a mere philosophical speculation; it is a practical truth. There have been many psychological discussions regarding it, which a man may never have heard of, or if he has heard, may never have understood; but if he fails to act on it in dealing with himself, or in dealing with other men, he may be led into fatal mistakes. Take, for instance, a father selecting for his son a boarding-school. He will take care that the sanitary arrangements are satisfactory, that the food is sufficient and good, that all is attended to that is necessary for his son's bodily health. Then he will see that the course of instruction is such as to develop his son's mental powers and

[1] 1 Thess. v. 23.

equip him for his career in life. And if he is a true father he will see that the religious education of his son is attended to, that he may learn to live as in the presence of God, and in view of eternity. If any one of these be neglected, we see at once that the training of the boy will be incomplete, and that the want will be hurtful to him. And so it is in all the relations of life: a man may believe in the human trinity or he may scout it—but practically he must act according to it, or he will not act with full justice to himself or to others.

So too it is with regard to the Divine Trinity. A man may believe it unfeignedly, or he may scout it as a theological speculation beyond his comprehension; but if he does not act according to it in his relations with God, he will fall into errors which may be fatal to him. To be in right relations with God he must look to Him as a Father who loves him, but who requires obedience from him; when conscious of disobedience, he must look to Him for forgiveness, which will remit all the penalty thereof; when conscious of weakness and inability to do his Father's will, he must look to Him for the help and strength he needs. That is, we may say, the normal relation of the sinner to God when he wishes to be at peace with Him. What is this practically but looking to God as Father Son and Holy Ghost? It is possible that without knowing God as such a man may approach Him in this spirit; and if he does so, who will say that he will not obtain

the salvation which he seeks? The true relationship of man with God depends not on knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity, but on cherishing those sentiments of contrition, faith, and dependence to which the Persons of the Trinity correspond. At the same time, that a man may truly have such sentiments with regard to God, it is needful that we have such a conception of the nature and character of God as will draw them forth. And except as Christ has revealed God we find no conception of Him in any religion that requires such sentiments on the part of the sinner. There may be contrition for sin, prayer for forgiveness, prayer for strength. But there is no security that forgiveness has been granted, and that strength will be given to conquer sin. The simplest man can grasp this through faith in the three-one God. He may not be able to understand all implied therein, or how Unity becomes perfect through Trinity. But he can comprehend that there is a Father, whom he has disobeyed and who forgives him; that there is a Son, who has borne all the consequences of forgiveness and made it complete; that there is a Holy Spirit, who brings him into communion with God and gives him strength to do His will. It is through Christ that man has come to know God thus. It was through Him that God entered into human history; it is through Him that He still enters into each individual believer, by the Holy Spirit, and enables him to realize that he is the son of the Father in heaven—a mystic truth,

but one without which religion does not rise above the level of philosophy.

And because this Threefold Name expresses all that God is to man, and all that man needs in God, it is the name which Christ has taught His Church to bear to the nations. It presents to them a God such as they have never conceived of, but after whom they have longed. Some rays of the light therein revealed they have caught and sought to express in their worship; but, separated from the full revelation, that light has been overcome of the darkness, which comprehended it not. In some of the oldest names of God among the heathen we have the conception of God as a Father in heaven. But when Christ came this had entirely faded: the Father of all had either become, as among the Greeks and Romans, the father of the gods and semi-divine heroes, a selfish, irresponsible tyrant; or as among the Brahmans, an impersonal essence pervading gods and men alike. So it was among the nations when Christ revealed the new Name; so it is still. To them the Name brings home with living power the great truth which their forefathers dimly saw. Certain tribes there are that seem given over to the lowest forms of idolatry, but even among them there is found some glimmering consciousness of a great Power above all. To them the Name comes with the revelation that He who is above all is their Father in heaven, who loves them as no earthly father does.

Among all nations, at least among all that have attained any degree of civilization, we find the conception of what can only be described as an incarnation of Deity. He may have the form of a sage or teacher, to whom supernatural wisdom is ascribed and divine honours paid, a Buddha or Confucius. Or he may be looked on as the incarnation of one of the many gods believed in, as in the case of the Hindu avatars; or he may be a being of half divine, half human parentage, as the demi-gods of the Greeks. In all these cases the need is expressed of some help coming from a source above man. To all who feel this need the Name that Christ has revealed brings full satisfaction, showing that God has once become incarnate for man's salvation, and that through Him man may obtain full deliverance from the sum of all evils—sin and death.

In all nations we find a desire among the multitude to have communications with supernatural beings, gods or demons, responded to by sorcerers or persons who profess to be possessed by them. Among a select few in most nations we find an intense longing after communion with the divine Spirit, a desire to realize that Spirit in their own. To all these the Name that Christ has taught comes with the revelation that the Holy Spirit has been bestowed, that He has inspired holy men of old to know and declare God's Word, and that He is given now to all who ask Him to bring them into communion with God.

The Threefold Name into which Christ bade His disciples baptize the nations expresses the God whom all the nations need, whom all the nations have after their fashion been seeking, whom He alone has so revealed that all men may find Him; and whom by His resurrection He has shown to be the true God, to whom be glory for ever.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESURRECTION MESSAGE TO MAN— I. REPENTANCE

Besides the new name of God, Christ gave His disciples a new message of salvation to bear to the nations—"repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name."[1] Repentance was the duty to which He called them, forgiveness was the grace He promised them. These great truths were not entirely new to Israel, they had been taught by Christ in His earthly ministry, but the resurrection gave them a meaning and power such as they had not before. And as in the Threefold Name He crystallized His teaching regarding God, so in these two words He crystallized His teaching regarding salvation.

We hear much nowadays about the need for a new statement of the doctrine of the atonement. What is needed is not so much to seek something new as to return to the old, and to keep to the first statement of this great truth that we have—that given by our Lord Himself. As He has stated it, it is quite simple—Man must repent, God will forgive. This is a statement so plain

[1] Luke xxiv. 47.

and so reasonable that it might be expected to command assent wherever heard. As a matter of fact it is a statement repudiated by every religion except the Christian, and it has power to find acceptance with men only through the words added to it, "in His name." This natural repugnance of the human intellect to accept the divine forgiveness has coloured many of the theories of the atonement, and led them to represent it as a sort of forensic process, through which remission of sins is obtained. But let us take the simple words of Christ's message, repentance and forgiveness of sins; let us study them carefully, and see whether they do not contain a message entirely satisfying to man's moral nature, fitted to save the sinner and to win the world.

These words imply one awful fact, that of sin. It is of sin that men are called to repent, it is forgiveness of sins that is promised. Sin is the evil to be met and removed; and if we look first for a little at the evil, we shall better understand the sovereign virtue of the remedy.

What is sin? It is lawlessness, hostility to the law and will of God. The will opposed to the will of God is the sinful nature; the act opposed to the law of God is the sinful act. I cannot deal with the whole question of sin, but will mention two traits, which bring out the need and fitness of Christ's message: it is abnormal, and it is ruinous.

Sin is *abnormal*; it is at variance with man's

true nature. I do not discuss whether the norm from which man errs is one from which he has fallen, or one to which he has not yet attained. Suffice it to say that he does not now conform to it; he is conscious of sin, and he carries the condemnation in himself. Take an illustration. One man kills another; we say that he commits a sin. A tiger kills a man; we do not think of saying that it commits a sin. The tiger acts according to the impulses of its nature, and is incapable of anything better; the man is capable of something better. He has no doubt within him motives that impel him so to act; but he has also within him one motive that forbids him, one categorical imperative that refuses all parley, and that condemns the act. He is conscious of a law within him which he breaks, conscious therefore that he is acting at variance with his nature. It may not be at variance altogether with nature as it exists in that man, nor with nature as it exists in most men, but it is at variance with what we realize to be the nature of the normal man. It is the highest part of man's nature that forbids it, and unless he is true to that, he is guilty of sin.

What is it that makes man untrue to his highest nature? Some answer that it is ignorance. Here we must distinguish between ignorance of the command broken and ignorance of the consequences of breaking the command. It is generally the latter that is meant by those who wish to palliate sin. They say that if men could

only see the consequences of their sinful acts they would shun them. But this does not touch the first impulse to commit the sin; and we often see that when men do begin to experience the consequences of their sins, they are unable to abandon them, as in the case of the drunkard or the gambler. On the other hand, we recognize that ignorance palliates the guilt of the transgression of the divine law, and that the greater the knowledge the greater the guilt. Ignorance is only the occasion of the sin, but there is something deeper which is the cause.

Sin is rather a disease. The word for salvation in some languages is the same as that for health. In the Bible we find healing used to express salvation. Sin is a disease, affecting man's whole moral nature, manifesting itself finally in the will; either making it feeble, and unable to resist temptation, or perverting it and making it prone to what is evil. If it is a disease, that shows that it must be unnatural. We do not go to a fever hospital or a lunatic asylum to see men in their normal condition; so we may not look on sinners as men in their normal condition. Jesus Christ was the only normal man because He was the only man without sin; and because He was the only man without sin He is the only man capable of being the Physician of sinners.

And already we get a glimpse of the fitness of the remedy He provides, repentance. If once the sinner repents, if he turns from hostility to the will of God, to obedience to that will, we see

that the remedy has already begun to conquer the disease. But how is man to repent? That we have to consider when we deal with repentance.

Then, sin is *ruinous*. It ruins man's moral and spiritual nature; its end is death. Here we have to look not at *sin* but at *sins*, not at the evil principle in our nature but at the acts to which it prompts. It is forgiveness of these, not forgiveness of the principle, that is promised, and we shall see how truly this meets man's needs. Every sin that man commits brings its own punishment with it: such is the law of God with regard to sin. The sin which a man commits may have consequences beyond himself, doing direct harm to others, or by example producing evil moral effects on them. For these he must be held responsible. But the inevitable punishment is in himself. Every sin he commits gives sin a greater hold on him—till it obtains a complete mastery; weakens the good—till it loses all power of resisting the evil. The Godward side of his nature becomes atrophied; he becomes at best conformed to the world, capable of living for it alone. That is spiritual death already consummated; and when the death of the body separates him from the world for which alone he has lived, it ushers him into an eternity in which existence becomes eternal death. Such is the fruit of sin. Some men speak of the cruelty and injustice of God in punishing sin with death. But there is nothing unjust or tyrannical in establishing just

and holy laws for the government of the universe. When Paul says, "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,"[1] we at once consent to it as a principle which we may not deny, and the suspension of which would leave us without any security for the ordering of the universe. And if the result seems to be utter hopelessness, as it is with Buddhism for instance, it makes all the more glorious the remedy provided by Christ in the forgiveness of sins.

We cannot understand the full meaning of this message of Christ as a message to the nations unless we look at the results of sin on the nations. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we have a terrible picture of these results, of how sin affects belief in God, and regard for His law. The nations had changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of corruptible man and four-footed beasts and creeping things, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever. The necessary effect of sin is to blind men to the true character of God, and to lead them to attribute to Him the same passions as they themselves have. The gods whom the nations worshipped at the time of Christ, and whom the nations worship still, were many of them monsters of lust and cruelty. The stories of their monstrous deeds are told with a relish of their enormity, as though the excess of their sin were

[1] Gal. vi. 7.

an evidence of their divinity. It is sometimes said that it is uncharitable to speak of idolaters as being guilty of sin in their idolatry; and such worship as that of stones and four-footed beasts we may set down to mere blindness and stupidity. But when it is a question of worshipping objects of vice, such allowance cannot be made. If sin is the breaking of the moral law, much more the worship of an outrage on the moral law is sin.

A necessary accompaniment of this degradation of the conception of God is the degradation of the idea of righteousness and of sin itself. It is hardly possible for those accustomed to Christian ethics to conceive how degraded religious ethics may become in heathenism. Sin is not conceived of as a violation of the moral law, but only as a violation of some ceremonial law. Murder, adultery, theft, lying, and the like are considered sins against society, but not necessarily against religion. They may even become religious acts, if sanctioned by the canons of the sect to which the perpetrator belongs.

Such is the curse which crushes man, a perversion of his true nature, bringing on him eternal ruin. It brings out the meaning of Christ's offer of salvation, deliverance from sin and from its consequences; or deliverance from the power and from the guilt of sin. Which of these should come first? The order of Christ's message is first repentance, then forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is the act of God, repentance is the

act of man. Forgiveness is always ready, but man must turn to take it. When the prodigal left his father's house, the attitude of the father towards him never varied; it was always one of love and forgiveness. But the prodigal could never experience, could not even know, that forgiveness till he returned. Christ had by His death and resurrection sealed for the world the forgiveness of God. The only thing necessary for men to obtain it was repentance. Therefore He bade His disciples bear the message of repentance to the world.

Repentance

Repentance means change of mind, showing itself in change of life and conduct. It may mean turning from good to evil, but as used by Christ and in all Christian literature it means turning from evil to good. In the earlier part of the Old Testament it is God who is spoken of as repenting.[1] Men saw a change in the relationship of God to men, wrath instead of favour. They thought the change was in God, they did not realize that the change was in them. The progress of Hebrew thought on this point is somewhat like the progress of European thought with regard to the sun. The rise and setting of the sun was at one time attributed to the motion of the sun. But when the true nature of the solar system was attained, it was seen that the sun did not move, and that its apparent motion was caused by the motion of the earth. So it was

[1] See Gen. vi. 6; 1 Sam. xv. 35; Ps. xc. 13.

when Israel came to realize that God changed not; they realized too that the apparent change was caused by their own change from obedience to rebellion, and that if they wished to experience again God's favour, it must be by themselves turning, by repenting.[1]

The work of the prophets was to call the people to repentance, from the worship of false gods to the worship of the true God of Israel; from disregard of God's law to a faithful observance of it. To enforce the law of Sinai in its ethical aspect was the constant aim of their prophesying, while looking forward to the time when a more spiritual law should be given.[2] When John the Baptist came, the last and greatest of the prophets, he took up the same call to repentance, and pressed it with greater intensity and conviction than ever before; for he saw that the great crisis of the kingdom of God was at hand, when mere connection with Israel would be of no avail, and only true repentance could save from the wrath to come.[3]

In the preaching of Jesus we see a call to repentance, which, while resting on the law of Moses, was universal in its character. He is always ready to appeal to that law to vindicate His action,[4] or to guide those who sought His direction.[5] He claimed to have come not to destroy the law but to fulfil it;[6] and He sought to

[1] Jer. xviii. 5–10; Ezek. xviii. 20–32. [2] Jer. xxxi. 31–34.
[3] Matt. iii. 2, 8–12. [4] Matt. xii. 5–8; John vii. 22–24.
[5] Matt. xix. 16–19; Luke x. 25–28. [6] Matt. v. 17 ff.

lead men from the letter to the spirit, to the law written on the heart and mind, that had been prophesied of old. He thus went beneath the local and temporary form to the universal and eternal law which it enshrined, and prepared the way for the dropping of the one and the establishment of the other.

When with the crucifixion the old had passed away, and with the resurrection the new had been ushered in, it was still the same call to repentance that He addressed, not now to Israel alone but to all the nations of the world. In this there was not only a new departure, there was also a new meaning given to the word repentance. So long as it was addressed to Israel alone, it meant returning to the worship of the God of Israel, and to the observance of the law He had given them. When addressed to all the nations, it must mean return to the worship of a God made known to them, but whom they had forgotten, and to obedience to the law written on their consciences, which they had disregarded. This word, repentance, marks the ethical difference between Christianity and other religions. That lies not so much in the law promulgated as in insisting on the necessity of obeying it. When that foundation is laid, the need of the fuller revelation through Christ becomes manifest. Let us then look at the call to repentance as a call to the nations to live up to the revelation of God and His law which they already had, and then to live up to the revelation which had come through Christ.

It is one of the axioms of Christianity that God has made Himself known to all men, and that His law is written on their hearts—a truth enforced especially by the Apostle Paul.[1] It is only to be expected, then, that in all nations we should find some expression given to these truths. And so it is that in lands far beyond the reach of the Mosaic or Christian revelation we find views of the divine nature and teachings of the moral law which might be adopted without difficulty by Christians—hymns addressed to the Supreme acknowledging His power, His omniscience, His holiness; statements of man's duty that seem parts of the Sermon on the Mount. These have been adduced by opponents of Christianity as disproving its claim to supernatural origin, and met by apologists of Christianity with attempts to show that in some way or other they must have been borrowed from the Bible; whereas the true position is that Christianity postulates them, and makes them the basis of the call to repentance with which it is charged for these nations. If these truths were not found among them, there would be no evidence that God and His law were known among them, there would be no meaning in calling them to repent. It is in insisting on repentance with regard to these truths, known but disobeyed, that Christianity differs from the very religions in which they are enshrined. Their followers acknowledge one God over all, but they leave His worship for that of vile idols.

[1] Acts xiv. 15–17, xvii. 22–29; Rom. i. 20, ii. 14, 15.

They acknowledge the moral law which He has written on their consciences, but they admit all conceivable violations of it as quite consistent with religion. The call to repentance requires them first to turn from these degraded views of God and His law to the higher view of which they are conscious, and forbids them to imagine that the two can be held together; and secondly, it requires them not only to assent to these truths with their intellect, but to take them as the rule of their will and conduct. Thus even as regards what are called the truths of natural religion Christianity holds a place distinct from all other religions, inasmuch as it requires that worship and life should conform to them. And it is often in the first attempts to live up to them that the feelings of shortcoming and sin are awakened, which prepare the mind for the clearer call addressed through Christ.

At the same time the call to repentance apart from Christ and His resurrection is futile. It does not remove the ignorance which obscures the spiritual vision of man and prevents him having a true conception of God and His law; it does not give the sense of responsibility before God which will make man feel the obligation to do His will; it does not show where strength may be had to enable him to do it. All these are supplied by Christ, and make the preaching of repentance "in His name" a living, dynamic call.

He has caused the "times of ignorance"[1] to pass, and has revealed God and His law to men in a way they may all apprehend. His teaching regarding the duty of man is just the teaching of what is acknowledged to be the highest law of natural religion, presented practically, convincingly, and within the comprehension of all men. Not only is it presented in precept, it is presented also in example. In Jesus we have a man living the law He taught, and being more in His life than in His teaching. And in so revealing the law which man has to obey, He has revealed the God whom he has to worship. He has shown God leading the life of a man, and in it has manifested those attributes of holiness and love for which chiefly God desires man's obedience and love. Here we see something of the meaning of authority being given to Christ. We see how He has authority from His own life to call men to holiness;[2] we see also how, with Him to appeal to, we likewise may go with authority to the nations and call them to recognize the obligation of holiness.

This revelation alone would not have been sufficient in a call to repentance. However perfect the law, however holy and loving the character of the God revealed, men would never have turned to Him if they had been left to the conclusion that He was indifferent to the destiny of those who sought to obey His law. And if they had seen only a world in which

[1] Acts xvii. 31. [2] See p. 111.

righteousness brought no special blessing, in which obedience was exposed to misfortune as well as rebellion, and all ended equally in death, they could only have drawn the conclusion that God was indifferent to His own law, and did not care whether men turned to Him or not. All this contradiction of providence found embodiment in Christ Himself, when His life of perfect obedience closed in the shame and agony of the cross. We think of the cross as the supreme manifestation of the holiness of God and of the love and self-sacrifice of Christ. Let us also remember that by itself it would have been a lesson of despair: if such a perfect life ended in nothing more than that, it would have confirmed the deductions from the darkest side of providence, that righteousness brought no special blessing to the righteous. The resurrection caused all such misconception to pass away, and revealed to the world two truths: that the final judgment of God was beyond the grave, where the full fruition of righteousness would appear; and that there had been appointed as Judge, a Man, who had Himself experienced all the bitterest suffering that in this world could befall righteousness, and who in the end showed that it was the law of life.

This was the point insisted on by Paul before the men of Athens: "Now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge

the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."[1] The wise men of Athens, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, scouted the whole thing. Where that is not believed in, there can be no convincing call to repentance; where it is believed in, there is a potency in the call that commands the conscience. So truly is the call to repentance a part of the resurrection gospel, and, when separated from it, without efficacy.

One element remains to be considered in the resurrection call to repentance, and that is power. A man may have full knowledge of the duty required of him, of the obligation to seek to fulfil it, and yet may feel that it is beyond his power not only to come up to the standard set before him, but even to set himself to its attainment. And it is here, where the ordinary call to repentance is weakest, that the resurrection call is strongest; for behind it is the power of the Holy Spirit. Here we see the meaning of the Threefold Name. It assures the sinner that the God who commands him to repent is a God who will enable him to repent. He gives him the strength to turn to Him, and He will continue to sustain him in all his efforts after holiness, until he is delivered from all the power of sin, and can serve his God with a perfect heart.

[1] Acts xvii. 30–31.

From all this we see how in the resurrection call to repentance we have the true antidote to sin. The ignorance, which is the occasion of sin, it removes by the revelation of God and of His law through Christ; the indifference, which the sight of the apparent immunity of sin in this world might produce, it meets by revealing the inevitable judgment beyond death, by One who has Himself passed through death; the weakness and perversity of will, which prevents efforts after holiness, it remedies by the power of the Spirit given to all who sincerely turn to God. In calling the nations to repent, we do so in the name of Him who by His resurrection from the dead revealed all these truths, who will judge, and who can save.

We have up to this point looked at repentance alone: it, however, does not stand alone. It is conjoined with forgiveness of sins. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness there can be no repentance. So long as man believes that there is no escape from the consequences of the sins he has already committed, he can have no heart in seeking to shun sins in the future; and without the revelation of God's love and grace, which appears in the forgiveness of sins, there is no adequate motive to induce the sinner to turn to God and do His will. These two great truths must ever go together; and we turn now to the consideration of the forgiveness of sins.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESURRECTION MESSAGE TO MAN— II. FORGIVENESS OF SINS

The forgiveness of sins is perhaps the most distinctive feature of Christ's message to the nations. In some heathen religions we find the conception of one God over all, though not as One with whom we have to do. In some, too, we find the claims of righteousness affirmed, though more as an intellectual postulate than as a practical duty. But forgiveness of sins, while it solves the problem at the root of all religions, does so in a way scouted by all, except that of Christ. A brief glance at how other religions have sought to solve the problem will enable us better to understand the uniqueness of Christ's message.

It would be wrong to say that the problem is primarily how to atone for sins, because its pressure is often felt where there is no sense of sin. It is rather how to placate the Power above man, with whom he feels that he has to do. In the disasters of nature, in the desolations of war, in the ravages of disease, in the final stroke of death, man has felt the wrath of a Power or of Powers, with whom he cannot

cope, and whom he seeks to propitiate. It is seldom that sin is recognized in the earlier stages of religion as having anything to do with this manifestation of divine displeasure, and propitiation is sometimes sought in acts of the most sinful nature. But when sin has been once recognized as at the root of all, solutions have been resorted to, which, starting from the guilt of sin and the righteousness of God, have ended by destroying the sense of sin altogether, and making the righteousness of God contemptible. And the reason is that they uniformly put the atonement in the hands of men. Two main solutions have been adopted by human instinct, which may be called the ritualistic, and the rationalistic.

The idea of the former is that to avert the punishment due to sin certain works must be done. These may be summed up under penance and sacrifice. In heathen religions the belief is widely held that by self-inflicted suffering sin may be atoned for, and religious merit secured. Painful pilgrimages, lacerations of the body, the severest fasts, are among the forms which this sentiment assumes. Sometimes these are prompted by a sincere desire to atone for sin, but more generally they are a mere piece of formalism. Even in cases where men have devoted their lives to endure them, it has come to be a mere profession to which they have hardened themselves. In most cases the worshippers make the pilgrimages occasions for

enjoyable trips, and do formal penances, which cost them little or nothing. How this works is plain. Men estimate the sacredness of the law they have broken by the severity of the penance they have to perform. Even when a whole life is devoted to it, the result must be either that the devotee feels that his sins are still unatoned for, or that he has by his own efforts fully satisfied God's law, and therefore need not regard it as anything above himself. Thus the natural result of this mode of securing remission of sin is to deaden the very sense of sin from which it springs. That this is the case all who have had to do with Eastern ascetics know.

Another form which this yearning of the human soul takes is sacrifice. It is generally some animal that is offered to make atonement for sin. It is looked on as a substitute for the sacrificer, and its death as the punishment due to his sin. Here again it is obvious that the guilt of sin can be estimated only by the value of the animal offered in propitiation. The intensest expression of the sense of sin requiring atonement is perhaps to be found in the words of Balak, king of Moab: "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"[1] We could hardly conceive of a deeper measure of the guilt of sin than this. Yet it only expresses a sense of the implacable demands of the deity whom the worshipper desires to propitiate. Balak's sole

[1] Mic. vi. 7.

object was to preserve himself from destruction by the Israelites, an object for which a subsequent king of Moab actually did offer up his son.[1] I have stood by an altar in India where such sacrifices were wont to be offered up, till they were suppressed by the British Government in the earlier part of last century. I have spoken with some who had taken part in these sacrifices, and the moral effect on them was evidently most deadening. They looked on them as means of placating *Devi Pipláj*, the bloodthirsty goddess whom they worshipped; and, having thus placated her, they did not need to fear that she would be angry with them for any further breaches of the moral law of which they might be guilty. Such sacrifices have necessarily the effect of riveting the chains of sin on the soul, instead of delivering it from them.

We turn now to the rationalistic solution; and that, briefly stated, is that atonement must be made by enduring the penalty. This is the solution of philosophic Hinduism and of Buddhism. They teach that every sin bears its recompense, as necessarily as a seed once sown bears its fruit. We see, however, that sins do not always receive due recompense in this life, and that suffering comes on some who have not merited it by their sins. To explain these inequalities, lives previous to, and successive to, the present life are postulated. Men suffer in this life for sins, and prosper for good deeds, which they have committed in a

[1] 2 Kings iii. 27.

previous existence. For what they now do they will be rewarded or punished in a future existence. This requires us to believe in an endless series of previous existences, of which we have no recollection, and an endless chain of future existences, in which the present will be forgotten. This is a system which has not only found almost universal acceptance in the East, but is also gaining the assent of many in Christian lands, who find the Christian solution of life, as they understand it, inadequate. But, independent of the denial of consciousness, the moral objections to it are insuperable.

It lands us in a doctrine of substitution without consent, and of suffering without discipline. Theoretically it is the same person who commits the sin and receives the punishment; but it is another consciousness of the same person, which means practically another person. The substitution is involuntary: a man has no choice but to bear the sins of some former being, of whom he is utterly ignorant; and he has no choice as to whether he shall be punished for his sins now, or whether they shall be passed on to some future being, who must suffer without knowing why. There is thus the substitution without the ethical influence of its being voluntarily offered and accepted. There is suffering for sin, without the disciplinary effect of being conscious of the sin which has caused the suffering.

Another result of this system is to destroy the distinction between good and evil. According to it, not only do a man's evil deeds require him

to be born again; his good deeds require the same. Since he does not receive the reward for them in this life, he must be born again to receive it, and in that new existence he will commit deeds which will require his being born yet again. Thus virtue is classed with vice as a cause of reincarnation, a misfortune to be shunned. Beyond both, the best thing is to avoid all action good and bad, and so escape all reward and punishment, and arrive at the goal of the cessation of personal existence. Thus the rationalistic solution of the problem of sin has the same result as the ritualistic, with even greater definiteness: it destroys all sense of the heinousness of sin and of the obligation of righteousness.

This brief survey shows two things: that while all men feel the need of escape from the consequences of sin, none have conceived the only true means of escape, forgiveness of sins; and that the outcome of every human solution has been to destroy the sense of the guilt of sin, and to make men regardless of the law of God. In commissioning His disciples to preach "forgiveness of sins in His name," Christ has given them the one satisfactory response to this supreme need of man.

Like the other great truths of the resurrection gospel, that of the forgiveness of sins has its beginnings in the Old Testament. In it we find not only prayers for forgiveness, which we find also in many of the old Aryan and Accadian hymns, but also the promise and assurance of

forgiveness. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin."[1] "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities."[2] Such thanksgivings abound in the Old Testament, and show the hope of ancient Israel. Alongside of them there is the system of sacrifice, which gave expression to the other side of the truth, that the consequences of sin must be borne. This came latterly to dominate the religion of the Jews, and to make it formal and hard. But the true Israelite did not look on sacrifice as necessary to secure forgiveness: he looked on true repentance as all that God required. "For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."[3] In the incident which is usually considered the occasion of the psalm from which these words are taken, we have a parable of the whole doctrine of forgiveness. "David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin."[4] Where there is true repentance there is forgiveness, though many of the consequences of the sin may be allowed to remain to discipline the transgressor.

In His teaching with regard to forgiveness, as in His teaching with regard to the Fatherhood of

[1] Ps. lxxxv. 2.
[2] Ps. ciii. 2–3.
[3] Ps. li. 16–17.
[4] 2 Sam. xii. 13.

God, Jesus does not speak of it as something new, but as an accepted truth, known to all. He assumes that God is free to forgive the sinner, as man is free to forgive anyone who injures him. There are some who take the ground that God is not free to forgive as man is, that God is the Lawgiver as well as the Father, and that regard for His holy law, and for the moral government of the universe, prevents Him giving an absolutely free pardon. Jesus, however, knows nothing of this. He knew the holiness of God's law as no one else ever knew it. He does not teach that forgiveness is without its conditions, or without its consequences. But these magnify the holiness and the love of God, and manifest the divine freedom of the offer of forgiveness.

First: Jesus always makes *repentance the condition of forgiveness.* From none of His words do we get the idea that a life of impenitence in this world will be followed by a life of blessedness in the world to come. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,"[1] is the burden of His message. He requires, too, that repentance should show itself by works, and not merely by words, especially by being ready to forgive as we are forgiven. The forgiven debtor, who refused forgiveness to his fellow-servant, had his own forgiveness cancelled.[2] In praying for forgiveness we are taught to conjoin with it as a condition, our own forgiveness of those indebted to us.[3]

[1] Luke xiii. 5. [2] Matt. xviii. 32–35. [3] Matt. vi. 12, 14–15.

We must forgive as we would be forgiven. This condition quite satisfies the moral requirements of God's law. We feel at once that so long as a man continues hardened in his sins and in uncharitableness to his fellow-sinners, forgiveness of that man would be an impossibility for a holy law, and would encourage transgression of it. But equally we feel that when a man has repented and turned from his sins, and shows a forgiving spirit to all around him, to withhold forgiveness would be inconsistent with a holy law, and would discourage the spirit of obedience and love which God desires in His children.

Second: In Christ's teaching *the consequences of forgiveness are borne by Him who forgives.* This great principle, which applies equally to divine and human forgiveness, covers all those postulates and facts on which the doctrine of forgiveness through vicarious atonement rests. This principle we see in most of the parables which illustrate forgiveness. In them it takes the form of cancelling a money debt. This appears in the parable of the two debtors,[1] in that of the unmerciful servant,[2] and in the petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." It may seem at first that it is rather lowering the conception of sin, and consequently of forgiveness, to compare it to a money debt. But by such a parable the full meaning of forgiveness is better shown than could be by any other, or by any

[1] Luke vii. 41–42. [2] Matt. xviii. 24–35.

abstract statement. When a man forgives an injury, for instance, he merely renounces the desire for revenge, seeks rather the welfare of the man who has injured him, and is even ready to do what he can to help him. But forgiveness does not cost him anything. If he were not to forgive, he would be no better off; and in forgiving he may feel a peace of mind that is a real gain to him. On the other hand, it is impossible for a man to forgive a debt without his bearing the loss of the whole amount of the debt. He releases the debtor from paying the debt by bearing it himself. This helps us to see what perfect forgiveness is in its essential nature. Forgiveness is self-substitution. The forgiver endures the loss or the suffering instead of the forgiven. Every time we offer the prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," we pray God to bear the burden of our sins as truly as we bear the burden of the debt we forgive.

It must always be borne in mind that a parable is not a complete presentment of truth, and we must not allow it to carry us beyond the one point illustrated. The main teaching of the parable of the unmerciful servant is that we must forgive, if we would be forgiven; and that of the two debtors, that to whomsoever much is forgiven, he will love much. In both cases, however, the forgiveness of a debt is given as the most easily comprehended illustration of the divine forgiveness. In the illustration, it must be allowed there are two weak points. First, it lends itself

easily to the idea of forgiveness being secured by a third party coming in to pay the debt. The parable of the unmerciful servant according to this would run, When he had nothing to pay, a friend paid the whole for him, and his master forgave him. Under this aspect the gospel has often been presented, more frequently in a former generation than in the present; and it is thus that the doctrine of substitution is often conceived. But the answer is obvious, that in this transaction there is no forgiveness at all, but only a transference of indebtedness from the master to the friend. The debtor will need to get the forgiveness of his friend before he is free from the debt, and the loss must fall on him.

A second defect of this comparison is that it does not impress on the mind the real cost of forgiveness. Generally the cancelling of a debt does not imply any great sacrifice on the part of him who cancels it. In some cases it may do so; and there have been no more heroic tales of self-sacrifice and lifelong endurance than those of some who have voluntarily surrendered property that was theirs by right and that others have wrongously seized. Generally, however, the forgiving of a debt does not strike very hard on the life, and to speak of sin as a debt that God has to forgive may leave the impression that it costs Him as little as it costs a prince to forgive a sum that is to him a mere trifle. To get quit of this error we have only to look at the cross of Christ; and the figure

of a debt, which He uses, will serve its purpose, if it makes us feel that every sin of ours which God forgives, He forgives by taking it on Himself at the awful cost which the cross reveals. There we see a Substitute for all men, bearing their sins; there we see a Sacrifice atoning for the sins that are forgiven; but the Substitute and the Sacrifice is the Forgiver.

The sins which Christ bore on the cross were sins against Himself as truly as against the Father; His suffering was a revelation of what the forgiveness of sins cost the Father as well as of what it cost Himself. A true father suffers in the suffering of his son; and if there is any meaning in the Fatherhood of God, it means that He suffered at the cross as truly as did His Son. No third party comes between God and man in the act of forgiveness. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses;"[1] and in Christ He revealed what it cost Him to bear those trespasses which He did not reckon unto them. There is ever a mystery in the cross, which escapes our comprehension, but the supreme fact to which it bears witness stands out clear and unmistakable—a complete forgiveness at an infinite cost, the fruit of the unfathomable love of Him who has forgiven us. Forgiveness that costs nothing to the forgiver, or leaves the suspicion of something remaining to be borne by the forgiven, is not complete. A love that

[1] 2 Cor. v. 19.

makes no sacrifice for its object is not one that will draw out love in return. But the forgiveness revealed in the cross shows what it cost the divine Forgiver, it shows that sin's penalty has been borne to the uttermost. The love there revealed shows that there is no sacrifice which the Heavenly Father is not ready to make for His children of mankind, and which the divine Son is not ready to undertake for His brethren.

And the appeal of that love and forgiveness is a constant motive with those to whom it has been shown. The cross is not merely the revelation of a past transaction, through which sins have been forgiven. That view, though it does not diminish the love and sacrifice there displayed, yet does diminish the sense of responsibility on the part of those who are forgiven. There is apt to be the idea that, the debt having been paid once for all, no sin that man now commits, however unworthy of one who has been forgiven, can add to the burden borne by the divine Forgiver. But the cross is not merely the revelation of a past fact, it is the revelation of an eternal fact, as real now as nineteen hundred years ago—what sin costs God. The passages in the Old Testament, which speak of God being grieved with the sins of His people, are no mere rhetorical phrases; they are only faint expressions of the reality. Every sin which anyone commits now is forgiven as truly as it is repented of, but it also costs the Heavenly Father pain as real as that revealed

in the cross. Every sin committed by one who has accepted the divine forgiveness is "crucifying afresh the Son of God." Thus by all the desire he would have felt to save his Saviour from the agony and shame of the cross, he is prompted to avoid aught that would add to that agony and shame now, and to live so as to show that it has not been endured in vain for him. The forgiveness which Christ commissioned His disciples to proclaim to the nations is the most powerful motive ever set before men to live a life pleasing to God, the only regenerator of society that can never lose its power.

Third: *By forgiveness the sinner is delivered from the penal consequences of his sins.* We may not say that penal consequences are different in their nature from disciplinary consequences. The difference consists in the spirit in which they are borne. God may leave many of the consequences of his sins to afflict the sinner, just that he may thereby be purified. But from the punishment of sin forgiveness delivers. Jesus in His teaching assumes this rather than affirms it, and proves it by deeds rather than by words. His miracles of healing are the great evidence of it. There is only one in which this deliverance from the consequences of sins as the result of forgiveness is directly taught, but it explains the others. When the paralytic was brought to Jesus in the house at Capernaum,[1] He said

[1] Mark ii. 1–12.

to him, "Son, thy sins are forgiven." The scribes who were present accused Him in their hearts of blasphemy, for assuming a prerogative which belonged only to God. Jesus in reply said, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." From these words of Jesus we learn that the palsy from which the man was suffering was the consequence of his sins, and that his cure was the consequence of the forgiveness of his sins. It was a matter of indifference to Him whether He should say, Thy sins are forgiven, or, Arise, and walk. The one was the removal of the root, and that could not be done without removing the fruit also; the other was the removal of the fruit, and that could be done effectually only by removing the root. We learn also that Jesus had power while on earth to forgive sins, and that this forgiveness meant the removal of the earthly consequences of sins. This interprets to us all His miracles of healing: they were the fruits of the forgiveness of the sins of those on whom they were performed.

While He lived on earth His power was limited. It was only the few that came into contact with Him that He could thus deliver from the consequences of their sins; and the

deliverance He gave did not always imply a final deliverance.[1] It is to be noted, too, that when He sent forth the twelve apostles He gave them the commission to heal but not to proclaim forgiveness. It was in His final commission that He gave His disciples the command to proclaim it in His name to all the nations. For then His death and resurrection had taken place: the former was evidence that He had borne the consequences of the sins of all men; the latter, that He was able to bestow on them the consequences of the forgiveness of their sins to all eternity. He has now the same power as far as eternity is concerned, that in His earthly life He showed that He had in so far as earth was concerned. It is for what will befall him beyond death that man dreads most the consequences of his sins. If he could have One to assure him of deliverance from them there, as evidently as the paralytic was delivered from them in Capernaum, he would be at peace. And this is what the resurrection assures him that he has. The same Christ who healed the paralytic lives for ever in the world to come, and has the same power there to deliver from the consequences of sins as He had on earth: power to bestow on those who are forgiven the full vigour of eternal life, as on earth He had power to bestow on them the full vigour of bodily health. The earnest of that is given now in power to lead a godly life, and do God's will

[1] John v. 14.

on earth. The full hope is expressed by Paul in the words, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,"[1] and by John, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when it doth appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."[2] Without the resurrection no such hopes could have been given to men; and when by the resurrection they had been secured, it was inevitable that He who secured them should commission His disciples to proclaim to all nations forgiveness of sins in His name.

One inference from what we have been saying is, that the forgiveness of sins is a miracle. Miracle has been defined as interference with the laws of nature, and that is the most comprehensive definition that can be given of physical miracle. A still more complete definition is, interference with the laws of God. The kingdom of God includes the spiritual as well as the physical, the supernatural as well as the natural. There is the same Lawgiver for both spheres; the principles of His laws are the same in both, and the working of them the same. Sin worketh death is the law with regard to sin; and forgiveness, which sets aside death and substitutes life, is as entire a miracle as healing a sick man or raising a dead man. It is interference with a divine law ordering the

[1] Phil. iii. 21. [2] 1 John iii. 2, *margin*.

spiritual world, as the others are interferences with divine law ordering the physical world. It is utterly vain to try to separate Christianity from miracle. Its supreme message is forgiveness of sins, and that is the supreme miracle of all miracles. If miracle be impossible, then forgiveness of sins is impossible: Christianity has no message for a sinful world, and we are thrown into the dismal despair of Buddhism. It is remarkable that, while Buddhism has no difficulty with miracles in the ordinary sense of the word, while there is no religion whose legends are so crowded with miracle as Buddhism, it cannot even conceive the miracle of the forgiveness of the smallest sin. Every sin must bring its own punishment to the uttermost, and the only hope for the sinner is to bear that punishment to the uttermost, and to try to perform good deeds that will have a better fruit. Working this out in a dreary, hopeless eternity is the only possible result, if miracle be denied and if there can be no interference with the divine law.

But Christianity does teach miracle. The miracles which Christ performed are not merely evidences of His divine revelation, they *are* that revelation. They are evidences that God forgives sins, and that when He forgives He removes the consequences. If He is unable to do this in the sphere of the natural life, He is unable to do it in the sphere of the eternal life. The miracles which Christ wrought while on earth were tokens to the people of His time

that He had this power in the natural sphere; the miracle of His resurrection is a token to men of all ages that He has the same power in the eternal, the spiritual sphere. If these be denied, then forgiveness of sins falls to the ground.

There are some who are ready to accept this consequence, and to maintain that the destiny of man is better so; that it is inconsistent with the divine government to suppose that any of its laws can be modified or changed in their working; that if they could, the moral effect on man would be bad, and would encourage him to neglect the divine law. The answer is that it is not inconsistent. It is one of the facts of providence that besides law there is will; and that will may so deal with some one law as to counteract its working and remove its consequences. One illustration of this within our observation is the action of poison. The effect of poison is to destroy life; and if anyone takes poison, the natural law is that he must die. But there is an antidote for every poison: if the antidote be applied in time, the effect of the poison will be cancelled: life, not death, will be the result; and the moral effect on the man thus rescued from death will not be to make him more careless in taking poison, but to make him more careful than ever. That illustrates the working of the forgiveness of sins. It introduces a power of holiness that cancels sin, a power of life that cancels death, the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the meaning of Christ's message to the

nations, repentance and forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is manifested in the bestowal of that power which enables a man to repent, and overcomes that principle of sin which begets the sinful deeds. We need not question which precedes the other; the two are inseparable. We may say that forgiveness works through repentance, and that repentance completes itself in forgiveness. The sum of the whole, in so far as this life is concerned, is a changed life and a tranquil conscience: a life that seeks to glorify God by righteousness and well-doing, a conscience at peace with God and assured of His favour to all eternity.

From this study of Christ's message of salvation let us now look back to the Threefold Name which He revealed, and ask, Would the message have any convincingness or power but for the Name? Could the sinner be convinced that his sins were forgiven merely by being told that they were forgiven? Could he be convinced of it, and of the infinite love of God in forgiving him, by anything less than it being shown to him that God had taken on Himself the full burden of the sins He had forgiven? And could this be done in any other way than by the revelation of the Son and of His work? When any other way is propounded we may look at it: until that is done, this one holds the field. Again, could the call to repentance have any power, if the sinner in his struggle to turn with all his heart

to God could not hope that he would receive strength to do so? And how could he be sure of receiving this power if it were not for the revelation of the Holy Ghost? Through the Son who gave Himself to deliver us from our sins, and the Holy Ghost who gives Himself to deliver us from sin, we come to know the love of the Father, which manifests itself through them; we lay hold of the reality of a God who forgives us, who redeems, and who sanctifies us. In the same way we see that but for the message, the revelation of the Threefold Name would have no meaning or purpose. It would be nothing more than a theory of the mode of the divine existence, on a level with the Platonic or Brahmanical trinities. Taken with the message we see that it is a revelation of God as the God of salvation, without whom men could not be saved. The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins—the God of salvation and the message of salvation, stand or fall together.

One element still needs to be taken into account to make the resurrection message of salvation effectual. Repentance and forgiveness of sins have been preached in Christ's name to the nations for eighteen hundred years. Have the nations been saved? Are even those nations saved that have accepted Christianity? We may say that they have been saved from many evil customs, and principles have been introduced

which may work out for them a higher salvation. But when we put the question in the full gospel sense, it is manifest that we are thrown back from the nation to the individual. In every Christian nation, as a matter of fact, there are those who are saved and who are the true Church of God in that land, and there are those who are not saved, who are however, more or less, directly or indirectly, influenced by the gospel, and who may be brought to a full salvation. What is the difference between the two? We come to the condition of salvation in man—namely, Faith.

Faith

In the Gospel according to Mark we read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."[1] The place that baptism has in salvation we shall consider when we come to deal with baptism. Meanwhile let us take up the essential of the message to each individual soul—He that believeth shall be saved, He that disbelieveth shall be condemned. This was the truth taught by Christ in the beginning of His ministry: "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."[2] It was the principle on which He acted in His miracles of healing. "Thy faith hath saved thee,"[3] were the words with which He was wont to dismiss those whom He had healed. When He rose from the dead and

[1] Mark xvi. 16. [2] John iii. 15–18. [3] Luke vii. 50.

gave His disciples the message of healing for the nations, He told them that it would be effectual just as it met this principle or response from man. God does not save a man against his will. Forgiveness is offered freely: if a man believes and accepts, he is saved; if he refuses to believe, he is condemned.

It is not difficult to understand what faith or belief means in human affairs. It is accepting as true what we hear, and acting on it. At the close of the great mutiny in India, when a number of mutineers were still trying to maintain the rebellion, the Government issued a proclamation, promising them an amnesty if they laid down their arms and returned to their allegiance. Some accepted at once; others would not do so for a time, their leaders persuading them that it was not a true offer. Those who believed were amnestied; those who disbelieved remained condemned as rebels. So is it with the message of the gospel. God calls men to repentance; He promises them forgiveness of sins. But until they believe that it is God who calls them to repentance, and who offers them forgiveness through Christ, the call and the promise can produce no effect on their lives. It is for them as though the call and the promise did not exist. By their very disbelief they are condemned. When they believe, the faith works out in their lives. They repent: they turn to God and seek to obey Him; and then the forgiveness bestowed by God is assured to them.

Between the faith necessary to accept the human offer of forgiveness and that necessary to accept the divine offer, there is as much difference as there is between the natural and the supernatural. A divine power is needed in man to enable him to accept the divine offer, and this is provided in the Holy Spirit. But in so far as man himself is concerned the act is the same. He is conscious that he can believe and act, and that he is responsible if he does not. It was faith that the apostles and first preachers always insisted on as the condition of salvation,—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,"[1]—and it is on faith that we have still to insist. We may always rely on it that the intellect of those to whom we give the message can grasp the facts we tell, that their consciences will bear witness to the moral truths we inculcate. There is also in them the consciousness of the divine, which will help them to grasp our teaching with regard to God and salvation; and for that additional power, which will give life to all these, which will convince the mind, win the heart, and constrain the will, which will in a word produce saving faith, we must depend on the promise of Him who has sent us with the message. The power of the Spirit promised to those who preach is promised also to work in those who hear. This we shall consider more fully when we come to consider the promised power.

[1] Acts xvi. 31.

CHAPTER IX

THE RESURRECTION COMMISSION—ITS GREAT AIM: DISCIPLING ALL NATIONS

From considering the Giver of the resurrection commission, the risen Lord—the receiver of the commission, the New Testament Church—the contents of the commission, the triune Name of God, and the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins—we turn now to the practical question, how the Church is to carry out her commission:—to spread the knowledge of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit among all nations, to lead them to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. In this great work the Church is now engaged, and her efforts, though far short of what they might be, are constantly becoming more abundant and more earnest. In the strain of the fight, however, the clearness of vision and confidence of power needful for success are threatening to fail. Many Christians have defective views of the aim they are to seek; others are doubtful whether the means employed are the right ones; others are fearful that the power in the Church is waning. Let us try to get back for a little to the vantage ground of the resurrection, to look at our work in

the clear light of the charge our Lord then gave, that we may return hopeful and strong to the task before us now. Two points we have here to consider: the great aim He set before His Church, and the means He appointed for accomplishing it.

The great aim which Christ has set before His people is, to make disciples of all the nations. The full significance of this will be better seen, if we take it as an answer to the question, now much before the Church, What is the aim of foreign missions, or rather of missions to non-Christian nations? To this question various answers are given, which, though containing much truth, yet fail to present the whole aim to be sought. At two of these we shall look, before studying that given by Christ Himself.

The first is that the great aim of preaching the gospel to the heathen is to prepare the way for the second coming of our Lord. This theory rests mainly on the words of Christ in His discourse on the last things: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations, and then shall the end come."[1] From this it is inferred that the Church is required to preach the gospel to all the nations mainly as a testimony; and when this has been accomplished the way will be prepared for the coming of Christ, by whom the kingdom of God will be finally established. This inference is supported by the analogy of

[1] Matt. xxiv. 14.

what He said in the first commission given to the apostles, "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."[1] As this was fulfilled by the coming of Christ at the fall of Jerusalem, so the other will be fulfilled by the coming of Christ at the end of the age. As the gospel was preached without the cities of Israel being converted before Jerusalem fell, so we have no reason for expecting that the world will be converted before the coming of Christ. The view of this school, then, as to the conversion of the world is, that it is not to be accomplished by the work of the Church in present conditions, but by Christ and His people at His second coming, and that all that the Church may expect to accomplish now is to prepare the way for that supreme event by preaching the gospel as a testimony to all nations. It will be seen that this is a Christian reproduction of the Jewish conception of the purpose of the coming of their Messiah.[2] The Jews had, however, a very definite aim in all their own efforts: they sought as best they could to bring all the Gentiles under the law of Moses and the sway of the hierarchy at Jerusalem, and they looked to their Messiah to complete the work for which they felt themselves inadequate. To maintain even the analogy with the old Jewish position, the Church must make efforts to effect that conquest of the world which, according to this theory, is to be attained only at the coming of the Lord.

[1] Matt. x. 23.

[2] See p. 39.

Taking this view by itself, there are two strong objections to it. First: it is not even hinted at by our Lord in giving His commission. He nowhere bids His disciples proclaim His gospel for this end, and we must keep in view the end He does indicate, if we wish to work in full harmony with Him. Second: it takes the sense of reality out of the efforts of the Church, and puts an arbitrary connection between the means and the end. If we are not to preach the gospel for the winning of the nations to Christ, then our work is a mere sham. It may be said that it is necessary as a preparation for the great event. That is true, but it is so because in our work we seek to give the knowledge of Christ, to turn the hearts of men to Him, and so prepare a people to receive Him. That is the aim which we have to seek, and if we undertake it with the conviction that we are not meant to succeed in it, it takes all reality out of our work. Hence this motive —merely to prepare the way for Christ's coming— while it has appealed with great force to some minds, and these mostly minds of great earnestness and devotion, does not appeal with much force to the conscience of most Christians, to what we may call the sanctified common sense of the Church. It sets before it a mere consequence in view of which to work—a consequence certainly most dear to every Christian heart—but not a result which will be the outcome of the work we undertake; and it is for results that we work in the kingdom of God, as well as in the kingdom of men.

A second answer is, that the aim of foreign missions is to save the souls of the heathen. This aim is recognized in the commission given by Christ. The words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned," are plain and unequivocal. This aim is one that was set before the Church in a former generation much more fervently than in the present. No one can read the appeals put forward, and the hymns written, in the earlier years of the missionary enterprize, without realizing the powerful influence it had on the Church in urging her forward on her missionary career. In the present generation this plea is unduly discredited, and that because of the deeper negation, that the wages of sin is not death. The primeval gospel of the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die,"[1] is held very tenaciously by a generation intent on tasting the forbidden fruit. And Christian apologists and advocates of Christian missions are too ready to give in to this spirit of the age, till their pleas seem to echo the words of the tempter, rather than of the Son of God, who said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."[2] It is no true charity to try to explain away the words of Him who came to seek and to save them that were lost, and who believed the aim so true and so essential that He did not refuse to give His life for it. The final doom of those who have never heard the gospel is an awful question, on which the mind

[1] Gen. iii. 4, 5. [2] Luke xiii. 5.

of man shrinks from pronouncing judgment. The only light which our Lord has cast on the subject is in the parable of the last judgment.[1] There we see that the basis of the judgment of the Gentiles will be the discharge of the duties of humanity to those with whom they came into contact. This frees us from the thought of there being anything unrighteous or unsympathetic in the verdict of the supreme Judge of all the earth; and it also impresses on us more terribly than ever the need of enlightening the nations as to what is acceptable to Him.

But this, the salvation of souls, is not the ground on which the plea for foreign missions specially rests. It is the ground on which all Christian work at home and abroad rests. It is a consideration which applies equally to all men in Christian and heathen lands; and if unduly pressed tends rather to discourage missions to the latter. There are souls to be saved at home as well as abroad, and they may be said to have a greater claim on the Church at home. We cannot tell who are saved, and if we could, it would be only for one generation. The work of salvation needs to be done afresh for each new generation. Thus this plea, standing alone, would rather tend to bind the Church perpetually to work only in the land in which she is. We need to take ground which, while satisfying the

[1] Matt. xxv. 31–46; see *The Christ of History and of Experience*, by Dr. Forrest, Lect. ix.

Christian conscience, will also make imperative the wider obligation.

This we find in the aim set before us by our Lord, to which we now come, and that is to "make disciples of all the nations." This sets before the Church an aim, which she is quite competent to seek, without prejudice to either of the other two aims at which we have glanced. It supplies the condition necessary for the fulfilment of both, but it leaves in the hands of the Lord who gave the commission alike His coming again and His judgment of the heathen. The aim of the great commission is to disciple all the nations, or to make all nations disciples of Christ. It is not enough to preach the gospel in any nation, to make disciples and to gather a church in it. The nation itself is to be made a disciple. That covers the whole work of the Church, both among the heathen and at home. The former is the initiatory stage, the latter is the work that is still going on among nations that have been Christianized, and that in the nature of the case must go on until the end.

Here let us ask, What is the meaning of a nation being a disciple? We may be helped to an answer by asking the analogous question, When does a man become a disciple of Christ? The natural answer is, When he trusts Christ as his Saviour, owns Him as his Lord, and conforms in all things to His teaching. That defines a perfect disciple, but if we were to keep

strictly to it, how few disciples would there be! Practically we consider a man to be a disciple, or to be a Christian, when he professes to take Christ as his Lord and Saviour, and to make His law the rule of his life. There may be much imperfection in the practice; but if there be the profession, and the effort to conform to it, the man is a Christian. So too a nation may be said to be discipled when it has become a Christian nation.

This leads to the question, What is a Christian nation? And we may be helped to understand this by contrasting what is called a Christian nation with a non-Christian one. England is a Christian land, India is a non-Christian land. What is the difference between the two? There are thousands, nay millions of Christians in India, many of whom have given greater proof of the reality of their faith than multitudes of professing Christians in England. On the other hand, there are multitudes in England who do not even profess to be Christians, and multitudes more whose profession is a mere sham. What then is the difference, which makes the one a Christian and the other a non-Christian country? We cannot say that it is a mere question of relative numbers. It is rather this, that in England Jesus Christ is recognized as the supreme authority in religion and life; and when the religious faculty is awakened, it turns necessarily to Him. In India He is not recognized as the supreme authority; His place is taken by the gods who

are worshipped there, and the religious sense, when it is awakened, turns instinctively to them. Let us see how this works out practically in the individual and in the nation.

In England a man may be godless, immoral, utterly indifferent to religion. He is not a Christian simply because he has no religion, and worships no God. But let his conscience be awakened, let him feel the guilt of sin, and the need of being at peace with himself and with God; then there is no one to whom he can turn but Christ. The moment religion asserts its sway over his soul he almost necessarily becomes a Christian, in the real living sense of the word. In India, on the other hand, when a man's soul is awakened to the facts of religion, when he feels the need of appeasing the higher powers, he as necessarily turns to one of the Hindu gods. He may have been awakened by the warnings and appeals of a preacher of Christ, yet the first effect may be to make him turn determinedly from Christ to worship more devotedly than ever the idols of his land, and not until he has found that these cannot satisfy will he turn to Christ as his only hope of peace.

Or take public opinion and political action. In judging public morality, in deciding what is to be prohibited and what enacted by law, the teaching of Christ is in a Christian land tacitly assumed as the ultimate standard. His name may not come forward in the discussion of public questions: principles of moral law and of natural

right may be all that are quoted; but none the less it is the principles and spirit of the gospel of Christ that ultimately rule. No institution that is hostile to them can permanently hold its place. It is coming to be recognized, too, that the same principles are to be observed in the dealing of nation with nation as in the dealing of man with man. All this is more or less characteristic of that community of nations called Christendom. In the conduct of these nations, or at all events of their Governments, we often see much that is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christ, and of which we say that it is more worthy of a heathen than of a Christian Government. But the very fact that we so speak shows the standard that we apply to them.

In India the law and spirit of caste rule public opinion and political action, in so far as there is any. Though many of its greatest abuses have been suppressed since the land came under Christian rulers, yet in infant marriage, in the degradation of women, in the religious sanction of vice, in the denial of human brotherhood, and other such details, we see the vast distinction between it and a Christian land. Or take Islam, which includes Mohammedan nations, with the Koran as the rule of life and politics; and in the laws of these lands with regard to polygamy, concubinage, slavery, and persecution, we see again the distinction between them and Christian lands.

We may conclude, then, that a Christian nation

is a nation in which Christ is the sole object of religious consciousness and the supreme rule of ethical conduct: a nation in which the only choice is between faith in Christ and no religion at all. This enables us to see the distinction between home and foreign missions, as they are called. It is not merely that the sphere of the one is home, and that of the other foreign lands; it is that the character of the one is distinct from that of the other. While both have as their aim the bringing of souls into subjection to Christ, the foe with which each has to contend is different. In home missions the foe is irreligion; in foreign missions the foe is religion. Behind both no doubt there is the same great hostile force, the enmity of the human heart to God. That is recognized in both fields; but in heathendom this enmity is organized under religion, in Christendom religion is organized against it. Thus a mission in a heathen land is like an army in an enemy's country, at war with the Government of the country; in a Christian land it is like an army in its own country, fighting for and succoured by the Government against rebels. In the latter case the nation has become a disciple of Christ, professedly subject to His law.

In this, too, we have an answer to the contention that till the home populations have been thoroughly evangelized the Church is not called to go to foreign lands—there are souls to be saved and Christian work to be done at home, which will require all the energies of the Church;

and if we expend them in distant lands we are neglecting our duty towards neighbours for whom God has in His providence made us responsible, to work among strangers towards whom we owe no responsibility. For the souls of our own household, of our own land, we are no doubt primarily responsible; no call elsewhere will excuse the Church for neglecting the work at her own doors. But the answer is that Christianity has been established in this land, and may be trusted to do its work; it has not been established in heathen lands, and there is no one to do the work there. No amount of work remaining to be done in a land where Christianity has been established will absolve the Church from seeking to establish it in lands where it is not yet known.

The great aim of the foreign missions of the Church, then, the aim set before the Church by Christ in His great commission, is to disciple all the nations. This means first to make all nations Christian, as the nations of Europe are Christian now. Following this there comes the constant work of seeking to make the Spirit of Christ absolute in these lands. Following the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," there comes the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But the first step is to secure the outward and universal acceptance of Christ by all nations, to make Christendom co-extensive with humanity. This is an aim which the Church ought to set before herself; it is one which she is

called on to accomplish, and which she may accomplish.

How is this end to be accomplished? How is a nation to be changed from being a heathen nation to being a Christian nation? We shall consider the appointed means in a subsequent chapter. Meanwhile I would merely say that the conversion of nations may be expected to follow the same laws as the thought of nations. We see in the history of all progressive peoples that for generations their thoughts seem cast in one mould. They have uniform rules of conduct and belief, and they justify them by principles which they hold as unquestionable. Then a change comes which loosens the old foundations, makes the people feel that they are insecure, and that they must seek for other sanctions. Such movements of thought are noted by historians. There is a tendency in modern historical writing to look only at the laws according to which these movements proceed, and to eliminate the individual altogether. Yet if we examine the origin of any great movement, we shall generally find that it has originated with individuals. Some great truth takes possession of one or more minds, and from them spreads to others. The progress may be slow at first, but if there is vitality in the truth, if it is superior to the system of thought into the midst of which it has come, it will gain more and more adherents, till at last it becomes the dominant thought of the nation.

It is the same law which works out in making a nation Christian. The first step towards the conversion of Europe to Christianity was the conversion of Lydia and of the Philippian jailer. For three centuries the Christian faith made its way in face of opposition and persecution by the conversion of individuals, till all the population of the empire was leavened; and at last, by the conversion of Constantine, Christianity became the recognized religion of the empire.

Since the modern missionary movement began, examples of the same process on a smaller scale have been seen. Those cases in which it is complete have been mostly among savage tribes, whose religion has not been grounded in any systematized thought. When Christianity was introduced among them, it had to encounter custom, prejudice, and the natural corruption of the human heart; but these were not entrenched behind any intellectual sanctions, or defended by any attempts at reason. So the old creeds and rituals were soon swept away by the power of the new faith.

It is different with such lands as India and China. There the number of individuals that have been affected is so small compared with the mass that has yet to be leavened, the progress is comparatively so slow, that the assertion has been made that these lands never can become Christian. But this is wholly to overlook the national character of these lands. We cannot expect that their habits of thought will be

changed, even for the introduction of Christianity. There are some who speak of the unchanging East, as though in it no change had ever taken place, or ever could take place. If this estimate were true, then indeed the prospects of Christianity were hopeless. But those who have studied the history of these lands know that changes, as great as any in Europe, have taken place in them; but they have worked out slowly, taking centuries for our decades. So we may believe that Christianity will yet conquer these lands, and that we shall see changes in them greater than any that have been in the past. But they will be wrought slowly, and the Church must be prepared to work with patience as well as with zeal, till the end has been attained.

The first step, then, in discipling any nation or tribe is to bring the truth of Christ into connection with as many minds of that nation as possible. This is most naturally done by sending to it preachers of the gospel; and as the truth taught by them finds its way into the hearts of the people, and they are converted to Christ, the foundation of the Christian Church is laid in that land; and she may be expected to grow till she pervades the whole nation. But this will not be attained unless she fulfils the commission given her for that nation. The commission is not merely to preach the gospel to that nation, but to disciple it; not merely to introduce Christianity to it, but to Christianize it.

The aim of the foreign missionary enterprize has sometimes been stated thus: To establish a Christian Church in the land to which the mission is sent, and when such a Church is established to leave it to carry on the work for the rest of the population, and withdraw the mission to other lands where the gospel is not yet preached. This seems to me an inadequate conception of the commission to disciple a nation, and, except under the constraint of providence, is not a right policy to pursue.

It is true that there have been instances of Churches in heathen lands growing in numbers and in character, while cut off from all intercourse with Christians beyond. Such an instance was the Church in Madagascar. When the missionaries were compelled by the hostility of the Government to leave the island, the converts they left behind could be numbered by tens. For years they were cut off from all intercourse with other Christians, and were exposed to cruel persecutions. Yet they continued to increase in numbers, and when the missionaries were allowed to return, they were welcomed by a church which numbered hundreds. But it was then that the real danger for the infant church began, and the need for further guidance and help from the parent church became apparent. When toleration and even favour took the place of persecution, there came to the native church the temptation to be tolerant of those falsehoods and vices which heathenism sanctions, and which Christianity

seeks to destroy. Numbers were ready to flock into the Church who were not ready to make any sacrifices, not even to renounce indulgences for the name of Christ. There was thus a danger of Christianity failing through its very triumph; and the constant teaching and influence of missionaries of the home churches became necessary to enable Christianity in that island to maintain the struggle with the heathenism that was entering within its pale.

This is typical of the difficulties and snares in the way of evangelizing a nation. There are two stages in the history of the Church in it. The first is the period in which Christianity has to struggle against a dominant faith, against the habits of thought and the moral and religious sanctions on which it is grounded. The second is when a Church has been gathered in numbers sufficient to prevent the feeling of isolation, when it is tolerated and becomes a recognized element in the sum of the nation. Then the subtle influences of the still dominant religion of the majority tends to transform it into something liker itself.

As an example of how this works we may take the Syrian church, or Malabar Christians in India. There is some obscurity as to the origin of that Church, and as to how they came to be settled in that part of India. They seem at first to have exhibited some evangelizing zeal, but for six centuries they have settled among the Hindus on the principle of mutual toleration. They have

preserved their Christianity as a matter of heredity and tradition, and have not sought in any way to influence their heathen neighbours. Their relation to them has been based on the principles of Hinduism rather than of Christianity : they have utterly failed as witnesses to Christ, and are looked on very much as a sect of Hinduism. This was the almost inevitable result of their isolation from other Christians, in the midst of a powerful hostile faith. It is no doubt true that God's grace may preserve professing believers even in such a position, and give them the Holy Spirit to quicken them and make them active in spreading His kingdom. But such a possibility will not excuse the Church for overlooking the opposite probability, which the facts of the case teach us. God does not suspend the laws of human nature to promote His kingdom. The same law is true for the Church as for the individual believer : she must overcome, if she would not be overcome. If a church enters a heathen land to establish the kingdom of God, she must not rest content with simply gathering a church in that land, she must continue to help and succour that church, till every other religion be rooted out of that land, and Christ be recognized as the only object of religious worship. To do otherwise would be to leave the nascent Christianity of that land to be paralysed by the ancient faiths. Till that land may be reckoned in Christendom, the work must be continued.

When this has been accomplished, it might seem

that the commission to disciple that land had been accomplished too, but there is the after effect of racial beliefs and habits to be reckoned with. Recent experience in certain mission fields has come to reinforce the lessons of the history of Christendom, and to show that it is harmful, if not fatal, to leave to itself a Christian community that has just been established, even though it has become unquestionably dominant in the land. We know the fate that befell Christianity after the conversion of Constantine had made it paramount in the Roman empire. In the terrible corruptions and idolatries of the Middle Ages we may see the revenge which heathenism took on its conqueror. The same tendency is to be seen in some fields where Christianity has been more recently established. The West Indian Islands have for generations been nominally Christian. There are native churches in them which have shown good Christian attainment and zeal, yet the traditions, the habits, the instincts of heathenism remain like poisonous weeds and threaten their very existence. In Jamaica, for instance, where Christianity, in so far as Church membership is concerned, is as strong as in England, Obeah, or African witchcraft, has still a strong hold on the minds of the people, and has at times played havoc with the churches, and baffled the efforts of the Government to deal with it. Immorality, too, is about as bad as in many heathen lands. In the neighbouring island of Haiti, which is entirely under black rule, there

has been a recrudescence of the worst forms of heathenism—serpent worship accompanied with cannibalism. Certain of the home churches came to the conclusion, some time ago, that the time had arrived for withdrawing the European agents and leaving the native churches to themselves; but they are now convinced of the mistake of such a policy as yet, and are sending out again agents to help the native churches through the difficulties that have arisen.

Connected with this is another question which has begun to loom on the Church's horizon, What is to be the permanent relation of the churches of the white races to those of the coloured races, especially of the negro races? This is part of a larger question, What is to be the relation of the white races to the coloured races?—a question that is forcing itself to the front just now. By the means of communication which we now possess, the remotest parts of the globe are brought into readier intercourse with one another than different parts of the same country were a century ago. The various races of the globe are thus being brought into closer relation with one another, and their relative positions are being adjusted. The more energetic and powerful races of the temperate zones are taking possession of the lands of the more feeble races of the torrid zone. It is generally motives of ambition or greed that have prompted this. At the same time the result is

infinitely better than the slavery which at the beginning of last century was looked on as the normal relation of the black races to the white; and as democratic principles gain ground among the white races, they will insist more strongly on the rights of the dark races being respected. Meanwhile this fact seems coming to be recognized, that it is only under the leadership of the white races that the black races can rise to their full development; and it is only as the white races maintain their connection with their home in the temperate zone that they retain the power needful for the task. Tropical environment causes them to lose their virility and to acquire many of the vices of the races over which they rule. It is only when they spend their youth in the more bracing clime of the temperate regions of the earth, and amid the more morally bracing atmosphere which there prevails, that they are fitted to be the leaders of their dark brethren. Such is the aspect which the problem at present presents. What modifications the future may bring, we cannot now say.

All this makes the duty of the Church more evident at the present stage of the world's development. If it is the duty of the white races to "take up the white man's burden," to train the dark races, and lead them to the highest civilization of which they are capable, much more is it the duty of the white man's Church to take up her share of the burden, and give those races that gospel without which any civilization they

may reach will be worthless and fleeting. The utmost that can be expected from the political and commercial leadership of the European nations will be a veneer over the superstitions and habits of the dark races, which, if the controlling power be withdrawn, will leave them to fall into a barbarism as bad as that from which they emerged. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only power which can give them the moral and spiritual stamina necessary to make their civilization beneficent and permanent, and ultimately, it may be, independent of the races to which they owed it. To give the gospel to these races, to carry out the Lord's commission among them, to make them His disciples, is the present duty of His Church.

To make disciples of all the nations has a meaning for the Church of this age such as it has had in no previous age of the world's history; because all nations are open to her efforts now as they never were before, and she knows these nations and their religions as she never did before. Looking at the countless multitudes to be won, at the strong grip which habit and superstition have on them, at the subtle philosophies in which some of their faiths are entrenched, and the pride of conquest that fills others, it might seem that the task was hopeless. But our Lord, who knew the end from the beginning, has supplied us with weapons with which the conquest may be made. He has

promised us the power by which these weapons may be so wielded as to be effectual for achieving the conquests on which He has sent us forth. To the consideration of these we now turn.

CHAPTER X

THE RESURRECTION COMMISSION—ITS APPOINTED MEANS

When we turn to look at the means appointed by Christ for carrying out His great commission, the first impression is, how inadequate they appear! The programme He has set before His Church is nothing less than winning all the nations of the earth to own Him as their Lord. The means He has appointed is Witnessing, under which are included Preaching, Teaching, Healing. To human vision nothing could seem more incongruous than the vastness of the aims and the simplicity and feebleness of the means; but nothing could show more conclusively the divine wisdom of Him who gave the commission and appointed the means, for it is by these means that all the triumphs of the past have been achieved. If the work seems hopeless now to some, how much more hopeless must it have appeared when first His few feeble disciples were commissioned with these means to disciple all the nations. Yet these are the means by which His faith triumphed over the religions, the philosophies, the power of the Roman empire, by

which it subdued the nations of Christendom, and has won all its recent conquests. As we think of the triumphs already won, we go forward to the conquests yet to be achieved, confident that the means which have proved so effective in the past are the best for the future too.

Witnessing is the great means appointed by Christ for spreading His faith.[1] The other means He has appointed—preaching, teaching, healing—are but forms of witnessing, and witnessing is more than them all, for it includes also being. A witness in the gospel sense is not only one who gives evidence, but one who is evidence; who not merely tells a fact, but who lives it. Even in ordinary language this is sometimes the case. When a man has been cured of a terrible disease, he may or he may not bear witness to the cure, he cannot help *being* a witness of the cure. Christ requires His people not only to bear witness to their faith, but to *be* witnesses of it.

Another element in witness-bearing, in its strictest sense, is that it is borne before persons who are ignorant of the fact or truth witnessed to, and who cannot otherwise come to know it. Hence it was not till after His resurrection that Christ appointed witness-bearing as the great work of His disciples. When He lived on earth there was no call on them to witness to Him in any special sense. All men could go to see Him,

[1] Luke xxiv. 48; John xv. 27; Acts i. 8, 22.

hear His words, and behold His miracles as well as they themselves could. Hence, when they were sent forth on their mission in Galilee, they were bidden simply to preach and heal.

It was different when He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Here was a fact which only a few of them had seen, and which the world had no opportunity of beholding. It was only by their witness that the world could come to know that Christ was risen, and living for ever in the place of power. If bearing this witness, however, had been all that they were expected to do, it would have had little effect on the world, and the fact might have never been noticed in the world's history. They had to *be* witnesses, to show by their lives, as well as by words, the power which that great fact had on them. And this they did when they received power, when the Holy Spirit, the gift of Christ's resurrection life, came on them. The visible evidence of the resurrection of Christ could be witnessed to by only a few. The power of His resurrection can be witnessed to, and is witnessed to, by His disciples in all ages.

The first manifestation of that power came on the day of Pentecost. It is quite possible that in the interval between the ascension and that day some of the disciples had spoken to their fellow-countrymen of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified; but their words had no effect, because there was nothing in the lives of the disciples to compel the attention of those to whom they spoke. When

Pentecost came, the power of the resurrection so came on the disciples, in the descent of the Holy Spirit, that they could not but manifest it to the world. Whether they had borne witness or not before, they could not now but *be* witnesses. The attention of all the people in Jerusalem was compelled, and when they asked the meaning of the change that had come on these Galileans, Peter replied practically, "It is the resurrection of Jesus. We bear witness of it because we have seen that God raised Him from the dead; we are witnesses of it because it is the power of the resurrection, the Holy Spirit, which the risen Christ has given us, that is manifest in us now." That is just the witness which the Church still bears. The witness of those who saw the risen Christ is still preserved in the records of the Gospels; the witness of the power that has come from Him is seen in all those who have truly believed in Jesus as their risen Redeemer.

The impression produced by this first witnessing of the Spirit-possessed disciples was one of supernaturalism. The multitude were confounded at the gift of tongues given to the uncultured Galileans. No doubt the burden of their message, the wonderful works of God, also impressed them, but what drew the attention of the multitude and convinced them of the presence of a supernatural power was the liberty of utterance given them. For some time in the infant Church the same element of supernaturalism continued evident—gifts of tongues, gifts of

healing, gifts of prophecy—compelling the attention of the world, and witnessing to the risen Christ as its source. There is apt to occur to the earnest Christian worker now the desire to have the same powers as these early disciples had. We are apt to think that they would be an evidence of Christ's truth, which would compel the belief of the world. There are some who say that it is only want of faith in the modern Church that prevents her having the same powers. There are others who claim to have attained them—to be able to prophesy, to speak with tongues, to heal the sick. I have not known of any who make these claims going with them to the heathen or the godless, to convert and win them with this form of witness. Generally the only result of their teaching has been to disturb the faith of Christians in the ordinary means of grace and power. And if any weight is to be attributed to the words of Paul, we may say that such manifestations now are not the fruit of the Spirit. He clearly and definitely declared that, as fruits of the Spirit, they were only temporary, and must soon pass away: "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I have become a man, I have put away

childish things."[1] A mother at first teaches her child by means of toys and picture-books, but she looks forward to the time when these will be put away, and her son will accomplish his career in life with the powers and acquirements of manhood. So was it with these special gifts. They were useful for the infancy of the Church, fitted to draw attention to the new power that had appeared on earth, but bound to pass away when the period of their usefulness had passed.

And what have we in their place? The abiding power, the permanent miracle: "Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three."[2] From the very beginning it was seen that the miraculous gifts were only accompaniments of another more essential change. The faith with which the disciples trusted the crucified Nazarene as their risen Messiah, the confident hope with which they looked forward to His glorious appearing, above all their abounding charity—the love which they showed to one another and to all men—manifested a continuous stream of new unfailing life, of which the tongues of fire and the speaking with tongues were only the introductory announcement. These are the permanent gifts of the Spirit, which continue to the present day. They are the evidences which won the Roman empire. Above all, charity or love was pressed as the great witness to the divine origin of Christianity and of its Founder.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 8–11. [2] 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

We see this very clearly in the Apology of Aristides, written in the second century. He says nothing of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit; he says very little about the miracles, and even about the resurrection of Christ. What he insists on is the pure lives of the Christians, and especially the love they showed towards their brethren, and even towards their enemies.

And these still remain the source of all true witness to Christ. Looking at Christendom as it is, such witness may seem lacking. When we think of the evidences of Christianity, we are apt to think rather of the great treatises that have been written on the subject, or of the benevolent institutions of Christian civilization. If we look at the lives of ordinary professing Christians, if we follow them into their business and social relationships, we may see honour and uprightness such as we expect too from men of the world, but little of the witness to Christ that comes from the graces of the Spirit. Yet such lives are to be seen, and are the most convincing proofs of the truth of the faith of those who live them. If any humble disciple, realizing the obligation of the great commission, feels that at the same time it is not for him to think of doing anything personally to fulfil it, let him remember that Christ has bidden His disciples be witnesses to Him first of all in Jerusalem, their own city. If he lives a life honouring to Christ, and is ready as occasion offers to bear witness to the faith that is in him, he is doing his part in fulfilling that

commission which has for its outer limit the ends of the earth. This same witness is borne on a larger scale in the many efforts that are being put forth to leaven and raise the masses, and to rescue the fallen and neglected. With all that unbelievers have said and taught, with all their claims to seek the good of humanity, it is still those who are inspired by the spirit of Christianity that are doing the effective work, and are witnesses to Christ that He still lives and is able to inspire lives of devotion and sacrifice.

The same is seen in the mission field. Wherever a mission has had marked success, it has been generally because the lives of the founders have been witnesses to the grace of Christ in a way which the heathen could not misunderstand. Thus Moffat and Livingstone, Mackay and Hannington, were witnesses to Christ in Africa, Williams and Patteson in the South Seas, Chalmers in New Guinea, and others too numerous to mention in other fields. To give full proof of this would be to write the greater part of the history of modern missions. These men are witnesses to the lands of Christendom which they left, that, amid the worldliness and indifference that abounds, Christ still commands the allegiance of some souls. They have become witnesses to the savages to whom they went of the love that is seeking to win them. They have preached the gospel by their lives in a way that has won to Christ multitudes of those who saw them.

And those who have been won to Christ from

among the heathen have become witnesses to their fellow-countrymen. Early in the history of modern missions, two islands in the South Seas—Tahiti and Raitea—became Christian in consequence of a battle in each between the Christian and heathen parties, in which the former were victorious. It was not the victory, however, which established Christianity, but the conduct of the victors after the victory. Instead of torturing and slaying their prisoners, as the latter expected, and as they themselves would have done had they been the victors, they prepared a great feast for them, and treated them as honoured guests. This put an end to all opposition to Christianity in these islands.

Thus it is that where witness is truly borne to Christ, it is still the most powerful means of winning souls and winning nations to Him.

Unfortunately, witness-bearing has a negative as well as a positive side, and may be as hostile to Christ as it should be favourable. There are many men who make profession of Christianity and by their lives dishonour it. The effect of such lives at home is well known, but I would rather speak of how they affect the spread of Christ's kingdom among the heathen. Missionaries of the Cross are not the only witnesses who go from Christian to heathen lands. Travellers, traders, professional men go also. Now, while we know that they go simply as Europeans or Americans, not as Christians, it is as such that

they are looked on in the lands to which they go. They are known to come from Christian lands, and they are taken for examples of the religion of these lands. And while we have to thank God that among them are men who in their lives show the power of the Christian faith, the lives of the majority are such as to bring scandal on the name they bear or are supposed to bear. Thus in many lands there is from the beginning a strong reasoned prejudice against Christianity, which the teaching of the truth itself, even when backed by the saintly lives of those who teach it, can hardly overcome. Hence Christian missions are as a rule most successful when carried on beyond the sphere of European intercourse, in districts where the teaching given is not contradicted by the lives of those who are supposed to have accepted it.

In the same way the policy of Christian nations, or what are supposed to be Christian nations, is often such as to stir up the contempt and hatred of the heathen nations with which they deal, and to prove a bar in the way of the acceptance of the Christian religion. This shows the need of earnestly teaching Christian truth at home, of bringing the power of a living Christianity to bear on all classes, of discipling anew nations that have already been discipled, so that those who go forth from them may confirm and not destroy the teaching of the truth;—the need of watching the conduct of Christian governments, that in their

dealings with other governments they do not set at naught the principles of Christianity. Unless progress be constantly made in these respects, there will be retrogression, which will tell on all efforts to disciple other nations. We have seen that neglect to carry the gospel to the regions beyond tends to deaden the Church at home. Equally true is it that neglect to evangelize the nation at home will tend to paralyse the work abroad.

Connected with this I may refer to two fields of work which are generally reckoned part of the foreign field of the Church, because they are carried on in foreign lands, but which are more truly departments of the home work of the Church, because they deal with those that are through nationality or descent nominally Christian. These are—the work among our fellow-countrymen in non-Christian lands, and the work among the Eurasians and other half-castes. The former go out from the homes, the schools, the churches of the home land, to be employed in civil or military service, in commerce, in planting, in railways, or in other active work. Most of them are in the position of overseers, and have the direction of natives who are under them. They have thus splendid opportunities of being witnesses of Christ; but the most that can be said of the majority is that their witness is only negative. They are upright in their lives and dealings, but they do not in any way forward the kingdom

of Christ; and many, cut off from the means of grace, with nothing about them to cherish the Christian life, fall into indifference and godlessness. The Anglo-Indian Evangelization Society is seeking to do the needed work among them, in so far as India is concerned; but it is not supported as it would need to be, if it is to overtake adequately the work before it. All efforts to keep such exiles in touch with the Christian community, to strengthen Christian principle and quicken Christian life among them, would be repaid to the Church a hundredfold, if it were only in the influence they would have on the heathen among whom they are, and the witness they might bear to Christ.

The Eurasians and half-castes are a mixed race, descended from alliances between the Europeans and the natives. In India they form a distinct society. They are mostly baptized, and make a nominal profession of Christianity. They are looked on by the natives as Christians —the examples nearest to them of what Christianity is. Among them there are many who lead a consistent Christian life, and some who have risen to distinguished positions. But the majority of them have a low standard of life, and do not command the respect of even their non-Christian neighbours. They come neither within the province of the chaplains who minister to the Europeans, nor of the missionaries who work among the heathen. So they are constantly lapsing into practical heathenism. We have an

example of what they may come to in the descendants of the first Portuguese settlers in India. They are looked on by the Hindus much in the light of a separate Hindu caste, and have come to be so much despised by them, that one of the greatest reproaches that one Hindu can address to another is Kristán; and modern missionaries in India have been obliged to give up the name of Christian for their converts, and to substitute that of Massihi (from Messiah) or Isái (from Jesus), so terribly has the witness to the name of Christ been perverted. There is a call to the Church to give special care to this class also, to rescue the name of Christ from the reproach into which it has fallen.

When we remember how our Lord bade His disciples be His witnesses, and how at first the lives of those who bore the name of Christ were the strongest proof of the divinity of His faith, and when, on the other hand, we see how much evil has now come to be associated with that sacred name, we feel how unfaithful the Church has been, and how her power of witnessing to Christ among the nations has been weakened. Let us trust and pray that soon a revival will spread through Christian lands, making Christians more worthy of the name, manifesting the distinction between those who believe and those who do not, and so enabling all men to know who are entitled to bear the name of Christ, and who are not.

Preaching is the second means which Christ

appointed for discipling the nations.[1] It is implied in witness-bearing, and is in fact a necessary part of it. The power that is in the life cannot produce its due effect on those who are impressed by it, unless the source of that power—Christ and His truth—be explained to them; and the simple statement of the facts regarding them is the essence of preaching. It implies, however, addressing the multitude, reaching them first through the word addressed to them. Sometimes the truths thus proclaimed may reach the hearts of the hearers independently of the character of the preacher, or even notwithstanding it; but true preaching is that which comes from the lips of those who feel and live the truth they proclaim, and who thus in their preaching are bearing witness. We have seen how the first preaching in Jerusalem sprang from the necessity of witness-bearing; of explaining the change that had come on the lives and conduct of the disciples from the outpouring of the Spirit; but it soon came to take the foremost place in making Christ known. As soon as the Church undertook definitely[2] the work of spreading the gospel, by sending out missionaries, preaching became necessarily the means they used. When they came to a new place, they proclaimed their message, and declared the great facts regarding the death and resurrection of Christ, on which it depended. To the wise men of the time it might seem a hopeless enterprize to attempt the overthrow of old religions and the

[1] Mark xvi. 15. [2] See pp. 131–135.

establishment of a new faith by such means. But "it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe."[1]

There were no doubt circumstances that greatly favoured the first preachers of the gospel. The universal diffusion of the Greek tongue supplied a medium through which they could deliver the message entrusted to them. Then the Jewish dispersion had prepared the way. In nearly all places in which any marked success is recorded there was a Jewish synagogue or place of prayer. Many of the Jews in these places were looking for their Messiah, and were ready to welcome the news of His advent. Their intercourse with the Gentiles among whom they lived had diffused ideas of God, of sin, of righteousness, on which the gospel as well as the Jewish faith rested, and had affected large numbers of the Gentiles, who were attracted by the truths of the Jewish religion, but repelled by its narrowness. These were ready to welcome a faith which offered them more than Judaism ever did, and in which there was nothing to separate them from their fellow-countrymen. Thus the first preaching of the gospel was conducted under auspices more favourable than it has ever met with since. The experience then gained established the efficacy of this means of work, and has given assurance and faith to preachers who in after ages have sought to carry on the work under less favourable conditions.

[1] 1 Cor. i. 21.

In most modern missions we find the exact opposite of what the early evangelists found. Missionaries going to a new field find first of all a language which they do not understand, and which it takes them years to master. When they have mastered it they find probably that there are no words to express the ideas of sin, of righteousness, and even of God, which are necessary for an understanding of the Christian religion; and it takes long before these are instilled into the minds of the heathen. Then they have to encounter the prejudice that rises up against any attempt to supplant the old religion, reinforced possibly by the hostility aroused by the conduct of Europeans who have come among them trading or pirating, and whose religion the people identify with that of the new teachers. Through this triple hedge of language, intellectual barrenness, and prejudice they have to fight their way, before they can bring the power of preaching to bear on the people. But when they have attained this they have found that its power has not waned. The preaching of the gospel can show triumphs in the twentieth century quite as conspicuous as those of the first.

Preaching is of course primarily the oral proclamation of the Word, but even in apostolic times this was supplemented by the written Word. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are examples of this. These were no doubt written more for believers than for

unbelievers, that they might know the certainty of the things in which they were instructed; but they were all part of the great work of evangelization. In the altered circumstances of the modern world, this method of preaching has an importance such as it never had in the ancient world. The press occupies a place and exercises an influence now to which there was nothing corresponding in gospel times. By means of it the printed Word has been circulated in nearly all lands, along with books and tracts illustrating and enforcing its teaching. There is, no doubt, in the written word an element lacking that is found in the spoken word—the personality of the speaker. When a man can say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken," when conviction of the truth and sympathy with his hearers appear in his words, it gives them a power which must always be lacking in mere written words. On the other hand, the written or printed word has advantages which the spoken word has not. It may find its way to places which preachers cannot reach, and may bring the tidings of salvation to men who have never seen the face of a Christian. It brings the truth as such before the mind; and if this deprives it of some of the power which a human medium might give, it also delivers it from the drawback of the inconsistencies which often neutralize it in the mouth of a preacher. It must be remembered, too, that behind the printed Word there is the Holy Spirit, and He can work conviction in the minds of

those who read as well as of those who hear. In my own experience I have seen as powerful conversions produced by the simple reading of the Bible or of a Christian tract as in any other way; and similar testimonies come from many mission fields. Those who engage in translating and circulating the Bible, in writing Christian tracts, or in producing Christian literature, are as truly fulfilling the commission to preach the gospel as are those who proclaim it by word of mouth. Bible Societies, Religious Tract Societies, Christian Literature Societies, are as truly agencies for fulfilling the great commission as Missionary Societies are, and the fruit of their work has shown that the blessing of the Lord of the harvest is on them.

Teaching[1] is the third means indicated by Christ through which the nations are to be discipled. Preaching is one form of teaching, but teaching includes other forms. Its aim is to give a complete and systematic knowledge of the truths taught. There can be no doubt that when Christ bade His disciples teach the things which He had commanded, He referred especially to teaching those who were baptized. We see how this was carried out in the apostolic Church; we read that those who were baptized continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. They were instructed more fully in the facts of Christ's life and words than they

[1] Matt. xxviii. 20.

could be in the single discourse by which they had been converted. We have probably in the Gospels the sum of the teaching that was thus given. In Christian lands we have this carried out through all the means of grace there enjoyed. In heathen lands such instruction necessarily follows the reception of converts into the Church, and often precedes it. In many cases it is the only method by which the heathen can be made acquainted with the truth. This is especially the case in women's work in such lands as India. There, in many castes, women are not allowed to leave their own houses, and only by Christian women visiting them and teaching them can they come to know Christian truth.

When we speak of teaching as an evangelistic agency, however, we generally mean what are called educational missions, which include secular as well as religious teaching. Do these too come within the scope of the commission which Christ gave His Church? In answering this question we must remember the difference between the condition of the world when that commission was given and its condition now, between the position of His disciples in the world then and their position now. Then comparatively few, even in the most advanced nations, could read, and books were so scarce that oral instruction was almost the only means for teaching the truth. At that time, too, all the learning was in the hands of those who were to be taught. The disciples who were commissioned to teach were simple,

unlearned men, who needed to be taught the elements of a secular education rather than to teach them. Now, knowledge is diffused through the world, and the desire to gain it is being begotten in all lands, heathen as well as Christian. And the greatest change of all is that the knowledge and the power of teaching it are now mostly in the hands of Christ's disciples; almost wholly in their hands in countries where Christian missions are being conducted. The question is not merely what instructions Christ gave His apostles, but how are we to use the vastly increased resources which we now have, in carrying out the commission which He still continues to us? To deny this would be to deny that Christ meant that all the powers which His followers might acquire in this world were to be devoted to His service. We must believe that He left it to their wisdom and intelligence, guided by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, to use for the spread of His kingdom the resources and advantages which the progress of the world and their own progress might give them. And one of the questions which the Church has now to answer is, whether she is using aright the resources of education which God has given her for discipling the nations.

In lands where there has been no written language before the advent of the missionary, and, as a necessary consequence, no one who could read, it is of course a necessity that along with the reducing of the language to writing

and the printing of books, the natives be taught to read them. Even in countries where there is a written language, and the translation of the Bible may follow models of native literature, the diffusion of education is not generally so great as to supersede the necessity of teaching to read. So far education is merely a means of spreading the Word, by increasing the number of those who read it. To such education the strictest literalist in the interpretation of Christ's words could hardly object.

The aspect of the question is somewhat different in the case of the great educational establishments, high schools and colleges, maintained by some missions, especially in India. There the greater part of the time is devoted to teaching the ordinary secular branches of a school or college curriculum. Instruction in the Christian religion occupies as a rule not more than an hour, though the atmosphere and influence of the school are Christian. The pupils who come, come for the sake of the secular instruction, and merely accept the religious instruction because it is given along with the other. And the question is a good deal agitated whether this is a true carrying out of the commission of Christ. Now here there are two questions which must be kept distinct—Is this a true effort to carry out the commission of Christ to disciple the nations? and, Is this the best means that can be adopted for that end? The answer to the first question cannot be doubtful. Whatever be the defects of these schools

and colleges, the teaching of the gospel to all the students is not neglected. The facts and principles of Christianity are taught to them at the most susceptible age; they are brought under the influence of Christian men, and see the example of Christian lives. Thus every effort is put forward to lead them to faith in Christ. With regard to the second question, it may seem to some, who desire more direct results, that those attained are not commensurate with the expenditure of means and of agency employed, and that if the same amount of resources had been turned to other methods with less adventitious aid, the results might have been greater. These are legitimate questions of Christian prudence, questions as to the best method of carrying out the Master's plan, in the present condition of the world. On these I do not feel called on to enter, and would merely say that all discussion of the subject must recognize that education is one of the means which God in His providence has put in the hands of the Church for carrying out her great commission.

Healing was one of the accompaniments of the first preaching of the gospel, and it finds its modern counterpart in medical missions. Their place as a means of carrying out Christ's commission requires careful consideration; for while they are condemned by some as a departure from Christ's command, as depending on science rather than on faith, they are condemned by

others as not being the simple preaching of the gospel. A careful examination of the place assigned to healing by Christ will vindicate their place as one of the most potent means of carrying out His commission.

In the Galilean commission the command is clear and definite: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils."[1] In the resurrection commission, with the exception of the record in Mark, we do not find any such instruction; but the apostles evidently considered the provisions of the earlier commission to apply to it too. Their ministry was accompanied by acts of healing. We have seen reason to believe that the passage in Mark's Gospel which refers to the miraculous gifts was not from the pen of Mark;[2] but it gives what was accepted by the early Church as the words of Christ, and it mentions what the record of the Acts shows was accomplished by the early disciples. The form is peculiar, and helps us to understand the true spiritual basis on which medical missions must rest. The words in Mark's Gospel are: "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."[3] It will be noticed that these powers are spoken of not as a means to induce men to believe, but rather as gifts to those who

[1] Matt. x. 8. [2] See pp. 90, 91. [3] Mark xvi. 17, 18.

have believed. They were given as signs to show to unbelievers that those who believed had a supernatural power within them. But after all these were only physical signs, occasional and passing, and were valuable mainly as tokens of the divine power in those who showed them. The power itself was manifested in a more permanent way, in the character of those within whom it dwelt. The love that guided the power was more convincing than the power which it guided. Had the power been used not for healing but for smiting with disease, it would have repelled men instead of winning them. It was the love that prompted the healing, rather than the power of healing, that won believers.

That love still remains where the Spirit of God works, and is as convincing an evidence of the power of the Spirit, and of the truth the Spirit teaches, as it ever was. But it works now by the ordinary means God has provided in nature. It is man's function to seek these out; it is the part of the believer to use them for the service of God's kingdom, and apply them along with the preaching of the Word for its spread. The healing is the sign of the love that prompts it; the preaching points to the source of that love, to the divine power which can heal the soul as well as the body. Hence medical missions are the true permanent form of the gifts of healing conferred on the first disciples. They carry the gospel to the heathen with a power of healing gained through the careful

study of the resources for healing provided by God in His creation. They are witnesses thus of a higher love, a higher sense of responsibility, than were the early gifts of healing. They show a love which not only uses the gift of healing when it is possessed, but which will spend years of toil and study in seeking to gain possession of it; a sense of responsibility which not only feels the obligation to use the gift when attained, but also the obligation to do one's utmost to attain it. The Spirit which moves them is the same Spirit which moved the disciples of old, a token of the supernatural power which still lives in the Church, and impels believers to seek the healing of the nations.

These are the methods of mission work, which we may say are derived directly from the great commission given to the Church. There is, however, at least one other form of such work which requires to be noticed, and that is the *Industrial Mission.* When native Christians, owing to change of religion, are deprived of means of support, when the rising youth of a Christian community can find no outlet for their energies, when after a famine a number of orphans are left on the hands of the missionaries, a systematic training in various trades or professions is given to enable them to earn their own livelihood, and workshops are established at which they may work. This is in some cases made a department of missionary activity. And there

are some who maintain that it is a source of weakness and of loss of spiritual power to the mission; that in undertaking it the Church has gone off the rails, and cannot expect to make satisfactory progress. Now there is as much reason in that as there would be in saying that in the early days of Christianity, when those that were possessors of lands and houses sold them and brought the price and laid it at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need,[1] the early Church had gone off the rails. The motive in both cases is the same, to enable the poorer brethren to live. The early Church did it by almsgiving; the modern Church does it by helping those in want to earn their own living. There can be little doubt that the latter is the better plan.

It may be questioned whether it is wise that this department should be under the charge of evangelistic missionaries. The apostles found that even the distribution of alms interfered with their proper work, the ministry of the Word. But they did not therefore bid the Church give up their alms; they asked them to appoint other men to the work who might do it more appropriately. The result was a fresh start in the growth of the Church.[2] In the case of industrial missions, it would be well to entrust them to men whose training and talent fit them for the work, as duly qualified medical men are appointed to medical missions. There are good men in

[1] Acts ii. 44. [2] Acts vi. 2–7.

the Church who have the requisite talents, and who would gladly consecrate them to the service of Christ in the mission field. We must beware of supposing that because one kind of work is not appropriate for one class of the Church's agents, it is therefore not appropriate work for the Church. Whatever means serve to advance and strengthen the kingdom of God are fitting for the Church to use, and the greater their variety the more will they draw out the variety of talent with which God has endowed her for His service.

Women's Missions.—In closing this chapter, a word must be said as to women's missions to women. This is a work which has been developed in its present form within the last forty years. Till then the classification of missions by sex was never thought of. In Protestant missions, at all events, women were understood to have their place along with men, and the work of both was blended together. So too it was in the apostolic Church.

It was to women that our Lord first appeared after His resurrection, and to them He gave His first commission. It was a limited one—to tell His disciples that He was risen. But we must not suppose that the wider commission was not given to the women among the disciples as well as to the men. Though they are not expressly mentioned as being along with the eleven when Christ first gave the universal commission, yet

the incidents of the whole day[1] point to their being among "them that were with them."[2] There can be little doubt that they formed part of the company[3] who received the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.[4] We have evidence that they exercised some of the miraculous gifts[5] which were then bestowed on the Church. And the way in which Paul speaks of those women, who were his fellow-workers,[6] implies that they took an active part in the spread of the gospel. While little is said of women in the apostolic Church, we may conclude that they took their part along with men in witnessing for Christ in the spheres open to them.

And it is on the same lines that the work has been carried on by Protestant missions ever since they began. Women have had their place in them, mostly as wives of missionaries; and there are no more heroic names in the annals of missionary enterprize than those of some of the noble women who shared with their husbands the toils and dangers of the field. Latterly, however, circumstances have led, without prejudice to the position which they formerly held, to some being set apart specially for work among women. Two influences have tended to this result. On the one hand, the position of women in those lands where missionary work was being done made it impossible for the missionaries to gain

[1] Luke xxiv. 9, 24; John xx. 18, 19.
[2] Luke xxiv. 33. [3] Acts i. 14. [4] Acts ii. 1.
[5] Acts xxi. 9; 1 Cor. xi. 5. [6] Rom. xvi. 3–4, 12.

access to them, and to do the work among them effectively required more time and concentration than could be given by a lady having charge of a household. On the other hand, the position of women in lands sending out missions had become more independent. They had begun to enter on careers hitherto open only to men; and the prospect of a career of service in the mission field, rescuing their sisters in heathen lands from ignorance and superstition, fired the hearts of many who had felt the love of the Saviour in their hearts.

Thus, as an outcome of Christian experience, women's missions have been established in nearly all the fields, and have proved one of the most powerful agencies in carrying on missionary work. As to the means to be employed, we need say nothing beyond what has already been said. All the means appointed for the disciples generally—witnessing, preaching, teaching, healing, training in industrial work—are those appointed for women also within their sphere. Some departments of work, such as bazar preaching, are, as a rule, beyond their sphere; others, such as zenana visitation, belong to it exclusively; and the teaching of women and children belong to it most appropriately. In general it may be said that while men approach the work from the side of the community, women have to approach it from the side of the home; and if the homes be gained the triumph of the gospel is secured.

CHAPTER XI

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

In speaking of the means which Christ has appointed for discipling the nations, we have found it impossible to separate them from the power He promised to make them effective. It is ultimately on that power that the whole success of the great commission depends, and it is therefore needful that we give it a more careful study. There is a way of speaking about power which may become mischievous, from looking only at those elements which are divine and beyond our grasp, and neglecting those which are human and within the attainment of man's effort. The power which Christ promised was the power of the Holy Spirit to enable His disciples to be witnesses to Him and to preach the gospel which He entrusted to them. The Holy Ghost is a Divine Power, and can be attained only by divine gift. Witnessing and preaching are human acts: we can tell what the human elements of power are in them, and unless we see that these elements are present we need not expect the divine element to be given. We shall therefore first study the earliest coming of power on the Church,

its human as well as its divine elements, then the causes that hinder its presence in the Church of to-day, and finally how it may be recovered.

We go back, then, to the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where the hundred and twenty disciples were gathered together after their Lord had ascended to heaven. We notice in them three characteristies which, if not tokens of power, are preparations for receiving it—Unity, Expectation, Prayer. "These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer."[1] They had been commanded to tarry in the city till they should receive power. They were waiting for that power, they were praying for that power, and they were all of one mind in waiting and in praying. We do not dwell on this at present, but note it to take it up again, when we come to consider the recovery of the power.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, the power for which they were waiting was given. I do not need to dwell on the events of that day —the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, the tongues of fire, the speaking with tongues, the clear proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and Messiah, the conversion of three thousand to faith in Him. It was in this last fact that the proof of the power lay. If there was power to convert three thousand in the city that had crucified Christ, there was power to convert all the world. When we go behind the

[1] Acts i. 14.

results of the power to inquire wherein it lay, we must beware of laying any stress on the external phenomena. When a flood bursts its barriers and sweeps over a plain, the first wave is crested with foam; but that soon passes, and the flood continues to sweep on in undiminished volume. The first coming of the Spirit was marked with the signs of wind, of fire, of tongues, and other miracles. In speaking of the appointed means, we noted that many of the first works of the Spirit were meant to be temporary, and only the abiding remained.[1] We have now to look behind the passing miracle of Pentecost to discover the abiding miracle, the real elements of power, given first to the disciples and continued to them still.

1. The first element of power which we notice in the apostles' preaching is a *clear, firm grasp of the truth* which they had to declare. This is an essential element of power in all speaking. No testimony can be of any power which does not rest on certain, convinced knowledge. If there be obscurity or hesitation in the mind of the speaker, it will inevitably communicate itself to his words, and deprive them of all power. A man must know what he has to say, if he would speak with any effect.

Now the first thing that impresses us in the preaching of the apostles on Pentecost, as exemplified in that of Peter, is the clearness and force with which they declare the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. And this truth they had learned

[1] See pp. 230–231.

just in the way that all truth is learned, by observation, and by listening to instruction. They had been scholars of Jesus throughout all His public ministry, and had learned from Him at first hand the truths they were to teach. They had watched His life, and had come to the conclusion that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. It is true that this had been revealed to them by the Father in heaven,[1] but the revelation came through the diligent use of the ordinary means of learning. Then they had seen their Master's whole course culminating, and all His teaching confirmed, in the resurrection. They had thus all the knowledge that was needful for them, and they had gained it through the means by which knowledge is ordinarily gained. But there was still wanting the element which alone could give that knowledge power: there was wanting that clearness of spiritual vision which would enable them to understand the meaning of what they knew. Their minds were still clouded by the prejudices of their race. They still had the idea that the whole aim of their Master's trial and triumph was to restore again the kingdom to Israel.[2] The Spirit, when He came, scattered these delusions, cleared their spiritual vision, enabled them to see the work of Christ in its eternal purpose, the salvation of the world. He enabled them to know *the truth*, and to speak with that grasp of the truth which is the basis of power. The knowledge of the facts and teaching

[1] Matt. xvi. 17. [2] Acts i. 6.

with the conviction of experience, and call others to seek what he knows that he himself possesses.

3. Another element of power manifest at Pentecost was *fearlessness of man.* Whenever men speak with a fear of what the consequences will be for themselves, there is a paralysis of power, a warping or denial of the truth. In the conduct of Peter in the judgment hall on the night of the betrayal, we have a sample of what sort of witness the disciples would have borne if the fear of man had remained in them. Since then they had had a lesson that there was nothing which they need fear. The resurrection had taught them that death, the utmost penalty that man could inflict, would be changed into a glorious triumph for all who were faithful. That was the object lesson, but something more was needed to transmute it into power, and that was supplied by the Holy Spirit. He put earth and heaven in proper perspective for them, enabled them to look at the things which are unseen, and to disregard what they might suffer through the things that are seen. The effect of this was shown when Peter himself had to appear before the council of the Jews, and to bear witness for his Master. The boldness of his words confounded the council;[1] they felt that there was a spirit in him that did not fear man. That spirit was characteristic of the whole early Church. It expressed itself not only in word but in deed, by readiness to endure death for the testimony of

[1] Acts iv. 13.

Christ. Stephen led the way, and after him there came a number of disciples on whom the persecution burst—humble disciples, whose names are not known to man, who had no gift of leadership, but who did not shrink from death for the name they confessed. The power of their witness was seen in the conversion of the bitterest persecutor into the most devoted disciple. It was no doubt the revelation of Christ that finally converted Saul of Tarsus, but that revelation could not have come with the power it did if it had not been for the witness borne by these disciples in enduring persecution, which enabled the Lord to say, "Why persecutest thou me?"[1]

This still remains an essential element of power in witnessing for Christ, whether by word or by life. Where there is a desire to please men, or a fear of what they will do or say, it is impossible that the testimony of Christ can be given with faithfulness. There is not now in Christian lands the danger of persecution which the first disciples had to meet, but there is the more subtle danger of social influence and ostracism. In heathen lands death may have to be faced as of old. In all cases the power of the Holy Spirit remains the same, where it is faithfully sought, giving boldness to disregard alike the favours and the terrors of the world.

4. *Inspiration* is perhaps the best word to describe the power of the Holy Spirit, which yet remains to be told. The elements we have

[1] Acts ix. 4.

hitherto been considering are elements of power in ordinary human speaking. But behind them there is a power which works through them all, which escapes analysis, and which is generally what we think of when we speak of the power of the Spirit. It is as impossible to define or analyse as life itself, but there are analogies which may help us to understand it.

Personal magnetism is a power known among men—the power which some men have of swaying others by their mere personality. Some have this power in a great degree: Napoleon the great had it pre-eminently. He was conscious of it, and he is said to have contrasted his power with that of Christ. He needed to have his troops before him, to let them hear his voice and come under the influence of his eye, and thus he could inspire whole armies to die for him. But Christ passed from this earth hundreds of years ago, and yet to the present day in all parts of the earth He gives the command to men to go and serve Him, and they go and lay down their lives for His sake. That is the power which Christ wields over His people, and which gives them power to serve Him. His Spirit magnetizes them—to use an expression common in human relationships—and impels them to dare all and to bear all for Him. He enables them to be sure of His presence with them, expels from their breasts all fear of the world, enlightens their minds to understand His truth, and teaches them to declare it, when called on to do so. This was

the power which Christ promised to His disciples, which He gave them at Pentecost, and which continues with them still.

We have up to this point looked at the power given to the disciples at Pentecost to enable them to bear witness to Christ. Something more was needful to enable them to lead the multitude to repentance. Unless there be in the hearer the power to grasp the significance of the truth he hears, he will remain unmoved by it. The message delivered on Pentecost was so new to the experience, and so subversive of the ideas, of those to whom it was addressed, that unless there had come into them too a new power enabling them to understand what they heard, and to realize its awful import for them, it would never have moved them. But such a power did come. As we turn from Peter to the multitude whom he was addressing, we see his words producing an effect such as had never before been produced on any crowd: conviction of sin, anxiety to be delivered from it, depicted in their faces, voiced in their cries. Yet these were the men who had shouted, "Crucify Him!" They knew that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified. They knew too that His tomb had been found empty, and probably that His disciples maintained that He was risen from the dead. None of these things had moved them hitherto. Peter's address had no doubt put the truth concerning these facts in a new light, but that is not

sufficient to account for the change which came over the multitude. In it we see the fulfilment of the other side of Christ's promise. When He promised His disciples the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and to enable them to bear witness to Him, He also promised that the same Spirit would convict the world in respect[1] of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. The power of the Spirit was felt in the hearts of the multitude as well as in the words of Peter, working conviction in them, and leading them to repentance. Thus alone can the work of salvation be accomplished, the Spirit in the soul giving effect to the word spoken by the Spirit. To this day these are the conditions of power in Christian work: that the Spirit should inspire the word of the speaker, and should work in the heart of the hearer.

The points on which the Spirit is promised to convict the world are just the points on which the world needs to be convicted, if it is to be won to Christ. Unless a sinner is convicted of sin, he will not repent. Unless he is convinced that only through God's forgiveness he can be accepted as righteous, he will not seek forgiveness. Unless he is convinced of the vanity and final judgment of the world, he will not cast in his lot with Him who overcame the world. These are points on which men cannot be convicted without the Spirit, and on which the Spirit could not convict them but for the resurrection of

[1] John xvi. 8–11.

Christ. This great event showed the terrible guilt of man in crucifying Him; it showed that the Father had set His seal to the work of His Son for the forgiveness of the world; it showed that the power of the Prince of this world was utterly vain, and that he need not be feared. All these great truths had been presented to the world as part of its own history, facts which could never be reversed. When the Spirit came on the disciples at Pentecost, and impelled them to proclaim these truths, He came also on those to whom they spoke, convicted them of their awful guilt, led them to accept Jesus as the Christ their Saviour, expelled from their breasts all love of the world and fear of its power, as was shown in the readiness with which they gave up their possessions, and the steadfastness with which they bore persecution for the name they loved.[1]

Such was the power of Pentecost—a power in the disciples giving them a clear conscious grasp of the truth, and impelling them boldly to deliver the message entrusted to them; a power in the people, bringing conviction to them and constraining them to accept the message. Was this power confined to apostolic times alone, or does it still remain, actually or potentially, in the Church?

In one respect the power given to the apostles

[1] For full treatment of this, see the author's *The Holy Spirit the Paraclete*, chap. v.

was unique, but this was due to their opportunities rather than to their enduement. We shall understand this if we look at a passage in Paul's sermon at Antioch of Pisidia. In declaring the fact of the resurrection, he gives as evidence, "He was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people."[1] Peter, on the other hand, in his sermon on Pentecost, says, "This Jesus hath God raised up, *whereof we all are witnesses.*"[2] These two passages show the difference between Paul and the other apostles. They could give direct testimony; he could only repeat their testimony. He had indeed a direct revelation of his own, to which he refers in some of his discourses[3] and epistles, which he sometimes quotes by itself as the warrant of his apostleship,[4] and sometimes conjoins with the revelations given to others.[5] But this shows that the other apostles had a power which he could not have, that of witnessing to the works of Christ which they had seen, to His words which they had heard, to the facts of His passion and resurrection which had been transacted before their eyes. The power to remember these, and to declare them truly, could belong only to those who had been actual witnesses.

In this respect, then, the office of the apostles was unique and could not be continued, but the fruits of their unique office remain the possession

[1] Acts xiii. 31. [2] Acts ii. 32.
[3] Acts xxii. 6–10, xxvi. 13–18. [4] Gal. i. 12. [5] 1 Cor. xv. 8.

of the Church for all ages. In the Gospels, and in the Epistles too, we have the testimony of the apostles in a permanent form, always fresh, always available. We are apt to think that if we had ourselves heard the apostles, still more if we had heard our Lord Himself, we could speak with greater power to convert the world. But if we had heard the apostles we would have heard only what is in the gospels; if we had met the Lord Himself we would have learned nothing essential beyond what is recorded therein. We are in actual possession of all the truth concerning Jesus Christ that is needful to save the souls of men and to disciple the nations.

In answer, then, to the question whether the power that was given on Pentecost remains for the Church to the present day, we may say that it does. The truth regarding Christ is as clear as then, the Holy Spirit is as living. But when we put the question, Is the Church as fully possessed of this power now as then? we feel constrained to confess that there is a difference. It can hardly be said that power is a characteristic of the Church of to-day, either as a whole or in any of its branches. When we compare the numbers of the Church now with the numbers at Pentecost, we might expect that they should soon conquer all the world for Christ. When we look at the results now compared with the results that followed Pentecost, we cannot but own that her power seems to have waned, almost departed. It is not enough to confess this, we

must seek to know the causes to which this straitening is due, and how by God's grace they may be overcome. Now, if we look back at what we may call the human elements of the power of Pentecost, we shall find that it is on them that the blight has come which restrains the power of the Spirit.

The first element of power which we have noted in the Pentecostal Church was a firm grasp of the truth they had to teach. This is blighted in the modern Church by *doubt* and *uncertainty*. Several causes have contributed to this. Modern criticism is attacking the records of the faith with an assurance which scarcely appears in its defenders, and which raises doubt not only as to their inspiration, but even as to their authority and trustworthiness. There is in this something of a reaction from the too rigid and untenable positions which the Church has in the past held with regard to the Bible, putting minor and non-essential points on a level with those that are essential and supreme. There will ultimately be a readjusting of these without any loss of certainty regarding the fundamental truths of revelation. But in the midst of the storm of criticism that is raging, in the midst of the process of disentangling that is going on, the distinction between the passing and abiding has been very much lost sight of. While individuals hold the faith in the Word of God firmly and declare it with con-

viction which wins and confirms souls; while the Word itself, in cases where it is neither commended nor discredited by man's advocacy, proves that it is as much as ever the power of God unto salvation; the Church as a whole does not hold that position of conviction and assurance which is needful in order to impress the world. That this will come, and power with it, we need not doubt. Until it comes the power of the Church will remain weak.

Another source of uncertainty and weakness is the influence, rather than the attacks, of modern science and philosophy. Especially is this the case with regard to the theory of evolution, which is widely thought fatal to the claims of Christianity. Hence the attempt has often been made by Christian apologists to prove that the theory of evolution is erroneous. This may or may not be the case, but the true answer is that the theory has nothing to do with the message of Christianity. It does partly affect Christian theology, but not Christian truth. In all theology there are two elements, divine truth and human thought. It is a necessity that truth present itself in a form that may be apprehended by the thought of the age. The form, however, is a changing quantity: the thought of one age becomes antiquated in the next, and as a consequence the theology that satisfies one age may seem meaningless to the next. But the truth of God remains unchanging, and will ultimately disentangle itself from the fading

garments in which the thought of man has clothed it. There is not so much need for reconciling science and religion as for religion taking a true position with regard to science. When this is clearly and firmly done, we may hope that the Church will speak with the assurance and conviction which will give her witness power.

One other cause of doubt we may look at—that which has come from the study of comparative religion. Fifty years ago the general attitude of the Church toward other religions was that they were false and Christianity was true. If elements of truth were found in these other religions, they were traced to the revelation of the Bible. Similarities between some heathen rites and those of the Old Testament were explained by the former being borrowed from the latter. Such positions are now recognized to be untenable. Evidence from all lands and all ages has shown that the great principles of religion are to be found among all races, that hymns of penitence and devotion were sung long before David sang those that have become the heritage of the Christian Church; that sacrifices for sin were offered in lands where the law of Moses was unknown; that precepts of duty and morality, which seem counterparts of the Sermon on the Mount, were uttered by sages who knew nothing of the Bible revelation; that high conceptions of the holiness and spirituality of God have been held

by men who knew not the God of Israel. As a consequence, some of even the professed teachers of Christianity have doubted whether Christianity can claim to be anything more than one of many religions; while among the Christian community generally there has been diffused a feeling that the religions of other races may suffice for them, and that there is no need for pressing on them the gospel.

But a true view of the facts of the case should lead rather to the conviction of the unique position of Christianity among the religions of the world. In speaking of the message of the commission, I have endeavoured to show how Christianity responds to all the wants which other religions express but do not satisfy;[1] so I do not return to the subject now. I merely add that the study of comparative religion is fast coming to a point which will leave Christianity undisputed master of the field. So long as the books of any of the great religions of the world remained unknown, it might have been considered possible that in some one of them would be found a revelation that might dispense with that of the Bible. Now they have all become known: it can hardly be held possible that any new fundamental religious truth is latent in any book yet to be discovered. And the result is to leave Christianity in a stronger position than ever. Its supremacy was formerly maintained in ignorance of the claims of its rivals; it is now established

[1] See p. 172.

in full knowledge of these claims. When this fact has been fully grasped, we may expect that the hesitation which this study has begotten in the minds of many will be replaced by confidence in the minds of all, that the great commission given by Christ is the only panacea for the nations. In this as in the other causes that are weakening the convictions of the Church at the present moment, we may discern elements that are working a change, and that will result in a firmer grasp of the truth by Christian people than ever before.

A second element of power, which we have seen to be present at Pentecost, was the living, personal experience of those who spoke. This is blighted in the Church of to-day by *ecclesiasticism* and *formalism*. The authority of the Church takes the place of the authority of Christ, and the authority of the Church is conceived as resting on an external order, more than on the possession of the Holy Spirit. This is only what is to be expected in the Roman Catholic Church, which teaches that the external order is the condition of receiving grace; but it is contrary to the Protestant principle, that the possession of grace is essential for the right receiving of the external order. The Church, owing partly to the necessary limitation of its power, and more perhaps to carelessness, admits to her membership and to her ministry persons who have none of the grace needful. The result is that union with

the visible Church, instead of being the consequence of union with Christ, is often nothing more than the consequence of conformity to custom. Ordination to the ministry, which should follow only on the call of the Spirit, is often only the result of the choice of a profession. An unordained man who has shown that he has the power of the Spirit, and who has won many to repentance and to a holy life, is considered inferior to one who has been ordained, though his whole ministry has been barren of results and even of serious spiritual effort. It is impossible that under such conditions the Church should have the same spiritual power as the Church of Pentecost. Yet the power is still there, and is producing results enough to show that it is working, and may work yet more mightily. Beneath all the formalism and ecclesiasticism that we have to deplore, there is a spiritual life stirring the souls of multitudes, that finds an outlet in the efforts put forth by the churches for the extension of Christ's kingdom at home and abroad. The blight has not destroyed the life; it has enfeebled it. Some earnest Christians, dissatisfied with the condition into which the modern Church has drifted, have separated from the organized churches and sought to worship God more after the manner of the first disciples before devotion clothed itself in forms. On this basis, too, missions have been undertaken and carried on with a success that has shown that the Master's blessing is on them. But at the

same time, if we are to judge by the evidence of results, we see that spiritual power has not forsaken the churches: the most satisfactory and durable results have been gathered by them or by associations that work in unison with them. The true remedy is not to abandon forms which have been found useful in the past as means of grace, and for preserving the life of the Church, but to have them filled with the Spirit that came on the Church at Pentecost, and which has been the creator of these very forms. Such a revival will expel the spirit of ecclesiasticism, and make the Church the servant of the Holy Spirit, instead of His lord; will expel the spirit of formalism, and will make the forms the channel of the Holy Spirit, instead of fetters on His working.

A third element of power which we have seen to exist in the Church of Pentecost was fearlessness of the world. This is blighted in the modern Church by *worldliness*, and of all the blights this is the one that is most fatal to the life of the Spirit. The fear of persecution and death which menaced the apostolic Church scarcely exists under modern conditions. But fear of the opinion of the world, of its censure, of its ridicule, desire for its favour, its support, its enjoyment, do exist. That is shown in the feebleness of the protest of the Church against the dominance which the world is asserting over the whole life of man, his business and

leisure alike, leaving no place for the service of God. It is shown further in the frequent readiness of the Church to adopt methods current in the world, but not in harmony with the kingdom of God, methods even that are condemned by the best sense of the world, in raising funds for that kingdom. And so the voice of the Church is contemned by the world, and is powerless to affect it. She has lost power even over those who profess to be her members, and cannot sway them to give to Christ that whole-hearted service which He requires, and has to content herself with the remnants of time and means which the world leaves. Everywhere we hear the cry of the impossibility of going forward, owing to lack of funds; while for sport and pleasure of every sort there is no stinting of expenditure. The attitude of the first Christians to the world is in remarkable contrast to the attitude of the Christians of to-day, and until the Church returns to that attitude and emancipates herself from the thraldom of the world, she cannot expect to have the power which she had at first.

Contrasting, then, the Pentecostal Church with the Church of to-day, we see a firm grasp of the truth replaced by doubt as to what is to be held as truth, spiritual consciousness replaced by formal acquiescence, fearlessness of the world replaced by deference to the world. Is it wonderful that the power of the early Church

should be replaced by the feebleness of the Church of to-day?—that the struggle with evil at home should become seemingly more hopeless, and the gains among the heathen abroad appear scarcely to make any impression on the vast mass that has to be won?

Yet when we have looked at the situation in its very worst aspect, we shall find that the grounds for hope and courage are far stronger than those for despair. I have spoken in a somewhat indefinite way of the Church and the churches, as is almost inevitable in the circumstances. In estimating the chances of the future we must avoid such indefiniteness and fall back on the true living Church of Jesus Christ. Within all denominations there are numbers of true, living believers who with a firm faith hold to the Word of God, who do not suffer the teachings of science to interfere with their spiritual life, who set the kingdom of God and its righteousness above all that the world can offer. These are the true Church of Jesus Christ; it is with them that the future lies, and it is to them that I address myself. And I would say that while we must seek to combat in detail, as we meet them, the various causes of weakness that I have enumerated, the surest way to recover power for the Church is to seek to attain those conditions under which power first came on the Church. These, we saw, were Expectation, Unity, Prayer.

We may have the Expectation of a great increase of power for the carrying out of the commission of our Lord. The source of power abides as full, as omnipotent as ever. The Holy Spirit was given, the gift of God, "without repentance." To say that it has failed is to say that the power of God has failed; that Christ, who vanquished death on earth, has been vanquished by death in heaven. The power remains eternal, unfailing. It is the channels through which it comes that are clogged: they may be cleared, and the power will come as triumphant as ever.

Then further, hindered as it is, it is still working marvellously among men. It is strengthening chosen men and women to bear witness to Christ and to call men to repentance. It is working in those who hear the call, leading them to repent. We have from time to time evidences of this that attract the attention of the world—revivals of religion cleansing the lives of multitudes at home, multitudinous conversions in some parts of the mission field, and the steadfastness with which converts have faced persecution and death in other parts. If we could gather together the results of work that is being done steadily and unobtrusively at home and abroad, we would have abundant evidence that the power which Christ promised His Church remains still to bless all faithful work. It is because the field is so wide, the results so diffused, and the work yet to be done

so vast, that we are apt to think that the power is failing. Instead of that, let us take what has been done as a pledge of what may yet be done.

And, even while we have been studying some of the causes of weakness, we have seen reason to believe that they are working themselves out. The criticism of the Word has done all that it can, and it has left the essential truths and the message of the gospel untouched, to be laid hold of with a firmer grasp than ever. Religion is now coming to realize that if it takes a true position with regard to science it has nothing to fear from it. The study of comparative religion has left Christianity more unquestionably supreme than ever. In movements such as the Student Volunteer and others we have evidence that the Holy Spirit can inspire men to rise above the conventionalities of religion and the allurements of the world. The impression of the whole is that of a vast force gathering itself up and accumulating behind barriers, which it must soon sweep away, carrying everything before it. It is for all true believers to be in expectation of this, and to be prepared, in the strength it gives, to carry out the great commission.

That this may be attained there must be among all believers the spirit of Unity. That is one of the conditions of power. The disciples in the upper room were all of one accord. In a united Church of a hundred and twenty there may be power to convert a world; in a disunited

Church of a hundred and twenty millions there may not be power to combat even the evils in the lands in which it exists. It may seem that in speaking of the causes of powerlessness in the Church I should have spoken of the divisions which exist in it, and which have substituted contention for unity. While this is true, it seems better to me to deal with it rather in connection with the remedy, the promotion of the spirit of unity, which is being more and more sought in all branches of the Church, and the attainment of which is one of the conditions of power being fully received.

Here we must not confound unity with union, nor divisions with disunity. In England we have examples of union without unity, and of unity without union. The former threatens disruption, the latter promises further unification. In the history of Christian Unity we may find an illustration of Hegel's law that everything proceeds from the positive through the negative to the absolute. In the primitive Church we have the positive stage: unity existed throughout the entire Church, undisturbed, and therefore untested, by differences and antagonisms. Then came the period of divisions, hatreds, and controversies, in which the Church became a Babel of contending sects and doctrines, and unity seemed non-existent. But it was there working out its end. Now we are entering on the realization of the third and final stage, when the unity of the Church will become absolute, not by the

extinction of the divisions that now exist, but by bringing them into one great harmony, in which all that is opposed to the Spirit of Christ shall be cast out, and all that is consistent with it shall be combined into a unity that cannot be broken. We thus see that all these divisions that have rent the Church are necessary steps toward the working out of that supreme unity which shall finally be absolute. If we look at the causes that have produced these divisions, we shall find them to be mainly three—creed, ritual, government. We must also allow that it is loyalty to the truth that has worked through these causes to produce divisions. Some Christians have become convinced that one aspect of doctrine, in what is after all a minor point, is the truth: others have not admitted it and have cast them out, and so division, controversy, enmity has divided the Church. Some have found certain forms of worship edifying, which to others have seemed sensuous and deadening, and again there has been separation. Some have found one form of Church government inefficient or tyrannical, and resorted to a form which seems to them more effective and free, and so again division has sprung up. Now it is manifest that while human nature is what it is such differences must exist, and a unity which does not find a place for them can never be final and absolute. But Christian unity is beginning to recognize that there may be a place for all these within the Church of Christ; that there may be differences

of creed on minor points along with a firm adherence to the great essential truths of Christianity—differences of form of worship consistent with worship in spirit and truth—differences of Church government, while acknowledging Christ as King and Head of the Church. What form this unity will ultimately take it is too soon to forecast: we may rejoice to see that its spirit is working, and all who are loyal to Jesus Christ will seek to carry it out in their own sphere. While they work loyally for their own denomination, they will look beyond it, will recognize all true work that is done for Christ, and help it as they can. Denominational loyalty is perhaps the strongest commendable human element in religion, but where it is the most obvious motive the world is apt to believe that ecclesiastical interests, and not those of a common Christianity, are being sought. Where, on the other hand, denominational interests are made subservient to the wider interests of Christianity, where Christians of all denominations combine for a work common to all, a witness is given before the world to the unity of believers more manifest than if these differences did not exist.

Now it is the effort that the Church in her various sections is making to carry out the great commission of her Lord that has been the main influence in promoting this spirit of unity. In the practical test of conflict with heathenism minor differences sink out of sight, and only the great verities for which the Church contends

remain prominent. This has produced not only a friendly feeling between the various missions working in the same field, but recognized modes of working so as to preserve mission comity. Two signal illustrations of this I may notice. There is the last great mission conference at Madras, in which nearly all the societies working in India took part, including high Anglican and Nonconformist, and the time was spent, not in mere professions of goodwill, but in drawing up rules to be observed by all the societies to regulate the relations between them and prevent friction, especially where they were occupying the same field. Then there is the more recent conference at Shanghai to commemorate the centenary of the landing of Morison, the first Protestant missionary who entered China, in which all Protestant missions were represented, and all sense of separation disappeared.

This has reacted on the home churches, and we see many movements which show how the leaven is working. There are those for incorporating union between churches of the same type, Presbyterian, Congregational, Methodist, which have divided on minor points. There is the Council of Free Churches in England, which seems to me the most advanced forecast of what the united Church of the future will be, all sections uniting on the vital truths of Christianity, and preserving perfect freedom for the working of denominational principles. Then there are those movements which are catholic in their

character, which are not attached to any one church, but have a home equally in all, such as the Christian Endeavour movement, the Sunday School Union, which has lately held an œcumenical conference in Rome, and the World's Student Christian Federation, which has lately held one in Tokio. And there is the first of all these movements, the Evangelical Alliance, which for sixty years has worked with the one aim of manifesting and fostering Christian unity. By arranging for a week of united prayer at the beginning of each year, it has given a direction to the effort after Christian unity which is combining Christians of all lands. When Christians are brought together to pray for unity, we may hope that it will in God's own time be realized, and with it will come to the Church the full enjoyment of that power which her Lord has promised.

This brings us to Prayer as the great means of power for the believer and the Church. Here we are met by the sad fact that prayer seems to be powerless. When we think of the number of prayers that are offered up in the Church, in the family, and in private devotion, we might expect results far greater than we have seen. How are we to get power in prayer? This must come ultimately from the Holy Spirit; but to have His aid we must clear our minds as to what prayer is, and see that we do pray. It is to failure in this, I believe, that much of the powerlessness in prayer may be traced. We

need a definition of prayer which will make us feel exactly the relation into which it brings us with God.

Prayer, in the sense of petition, is generally defined to be, "The offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to His will." This expresses fairly the general conception of prayer. Yet it is utterly inadequate: it is consistent with conduct which would neutralize the prayer offered. A man may desire to be good and say the same to God, without making any effort after holiness. He may wish the kingdom of God to spread in all lands, and express the same in prayer, and do nothing for it by gifts or personal service. To such prayers there is no promise of answer. So the exhortation to prayer is often supplemented by the warning that it must be sincere and must be accompanied by work. This betrays a consciousness that prayer by itself, as usually conceived, is not adequate, and shows that we must seek a more satisfactory definition.

To do so, let us turn to the promise of our Lord, on which depends our assurance of having our prayers fulfilled: "Ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."[1] Prayer is asking God for what we *will*, not for what we *wish*: it is the expression of will, not merely of desire. This removes all need of qualifying it as sincere. Will is will, and may be weak or strong, but cannot be anything but sincere. We can say that a prayer is not sincere only in the sense that it

[1] John xv. 7.

is not a true expression of the will—that is, that it is not a prayer at all. There is no need to say that it must be accompanied by work. If it is an expression of the will, that will must rule the whole man, and find expression in work as well as in word where work is possible. That is one side of prayer: the other is subordination to the will of God. "Thy will be done,"[1] is the basis of all true prayer. This is shown in the condition which Christ attached to the promise we have quoted—"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you."[2] If the mind is enlightened by the teaching and Spirit of Christ, it will come to seek only those things which are in accordance with the divine will. Yet true prayer will always be the expression of the human will, even though ignorant of the divine will in the matter sought, but in entire submission to that will. In the prayer of our Lord in Gethsemane we have the strongest expression of will, and the most entire submission to the will of the Father: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."[3] If we define prayer, then, in terms of Christ's teaching, it will be, The expression of our will to God, or asking God for what we will, in subordination to His will.

Let us now see how this affects the question of powerlessness in prayer. If all the wish-prayer of the Church were transmuted into will-prayer, what human power would it not represent, what

[1] Matt. vi. 10. [2] John xv. 7. [3] Matt. xxvi. 39.

divine power would it not command! The petition, "Thy kingdom come," has for nineteen centuries been offered up by the followers of Christ, and where it has been anything more than a mere form we need not doubt that it has been the expression of a sincere wish. Yet how far are we from seeing the answer! And need we be astonished at this? Do we not think of these prayers as being, what for the most part probably they were, mere expressions of the pious wish of the worshippers? We can understand how little or no result followed from that. Let us try to imagine what the result would have been, if every time that prayer had been offered, it had expressed the will of the worshipper. We would then have thought it strange that the whole world had not been won for Christ; for it would have implied an amount of work, prompted by the same will, that would have spread throughout the earth. And on such work we might have expected the power to be bestowed which would have won mankind.

If the will-prayer of the Church be offered up to God for the Spirit He has promised, it will lead the Church to seek out and put away all hindrances to His coming. Then we may hope she will go forth, clothed with the power her Lord has promised, equipped with the weapons He has furnished, to win all nations to own Him as Lord.

CHAPTER XII

THE SACRAMENT OF THE RESURRECTION

The use of the appointed means by the Church, the gift of the promised power by the Lord, are the forces, human and divine, by which the great commission is to be accomplished. The union of these two is symbolized and sealed in the sacrament of baptism, which our Lord instituted when He gave the commission.

The sacraments of the New Covenant are baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is the order in which they are ordinarily put, and it is supposed to indicate their relative position—baptism being considered the sacrament of initiation into the Church, and the Lord's Supper that of full membership. This is not, however, the true order. It is not true historically: the Lord's Supper was instituted first, baptism afterwards. Nor is it true sacramentally: the Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord before His crucifixion to commemorate His passion; baptism was instituted after His resurrection to show forth His constant presence with His Church in the great work of discipling the nations. The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of the Church's redemp-

tion; Baptism is the sacrament of the Church's service. It is in the strength of the baptismal covenant, not in the strength of the eucharistic covenant, that Christ's sacramental host goes forth to the conquest of all lands.

And it is because the supreme service to which the Church is called is discipling the nations, winning souls from the world to faith in Christ, that baptism has come to be considered the initiatory sacrament of the Church. Each soul that comes under the teaching of the Church enters on Christian discipleship, and baptism is the token thereof. It is therefore for him the sacrament of initiation into the school of Christ. It is from this point of view that baptism is usually regarded, and that the controversies regarding it have been fought. Without denying the importance of these, I yet maintain that a complete view of the sacrament requires that it be looked at from the side of the baptizer as well as of the baptized, that its significance for those who administer the sacrament be considered as well as its significance for those who receive it. I believe the controversies regarding it would have been more satisfactory, if the question had been approached from the side of the Church, and after considering what the sacrament means for her—the service to which it pledges her, and the power which it pledges to her, the consideration had been taken up of what it means for those who are baptized—the powers, human and divine, that are pledged to work for their regeneration;

and it would be for the edification and quickening of the Church, if this double aspect of the sacrament were made prominent in every baptismal service.[1] It is not my purpose to take up the whole question of baptism. I take it up from the standpoint of the Church administering it, as that suggested by the words of the commission, and required by the subject with which we are dealing. I will also apply it only to the mission field, avoiding the controversies which would arise in applying it to the home field.

Baptism existed as a religious rite before Christ instituted it as a sacrament of His faith. Though there is no mention of it in the Old Testament, we know that it was practised by the Jews. It was administered to the Gentiles when they were received into the number of the Covenant people: it was their birth into Israel. With John the Baptist it enters into the full light of history. He preached the baptism of repentance, to show that something more was necessary for admission into the kingdom of God than mere descent from Abraham.[2] He thereby forecasted a kingdom of God, founded not on earthly birth, but on repentance.

Christ's attitude to baptism needs to be carefully noted, for it emphasizes the difference between His earthly and His resurrection ministry. He did not Himself baptize, though

[1] See pp. 296–298.

[2] Matt. iii. 8, 9.

at first His disciples did. They followed the example of John the Baptist and his disciples, and Jesus allowed them to work on lines to which they were accustomed. But when He became aware that the practice of His disciples was being marked, and possibly misinterpreted, He left the place and began afresh in a new sphere.[1] He never authorized baptism by His example, and when He sent His apostles to evangelize, He gave them no authority to baptize. To have instituted it during His earthly ministry would have frustrated that ministry. We have seen[2] how His first aim as the Messiah was to win Israel to be true children of the kingdom of God, and how that debarred Him from working among the Gentiles. It likewise prevented Him seeking to establish a separate church within Israel. So long as He confined Himself to teaching and working miracles, He stood in the same relation to all the house of Israel. If He had by such an ordinance as baptism separated His followers from the rest of their nation, He would have appeared not as the Messiah of Israel, but as the founder of a sect. When, however, the Jews had rejected Him as their Messiah, and so come into the same position before God as the rest of the world, it was no longer a question of making a distinction between His disciples and them, but between His disciples and the world. That was the mark of His Church. It was to bring men out of the world that He gave His

[1] John iii. 22, iv. 1, 3. [2] See pp. 50–22.

disciples their commission, and to make the distinction clear some outward symbol was necessary. Thus what would have been a hindrance to His work before His death became essential to it after His resurrection. Besides this, the same principle holds here, which we have seen to be applicable to all His resurrection teaching. Not until He had by His death and resurrection established the truth on an impregnable foundation, did He give His disciples the commission to teach it; and not till then did He institute and give to His disciples the commission to administer the sacrament which symbolized and sealed that truth. Some have suggested other occasions on which Christ may have commissioned His disciples to baptize—such as His discourse at the Last Supper. But a careful examination of the question shows that this was the only possible occasion. The conditions requisite for the institution of baptism did not exist before.

While we have four accounts of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we have only one of the institution of baptism, that given by Matthew.[1] Other references in the apostolic writings must be tested by it, and a careful study of it is all that is necessary to enable us to understand its place and meaning in connection with the great commission.

Christ simply gives the command to baptize: He neither says what baptism is, nor how it is

[1] Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

to be administered: His disciples were acquainted with the rite. The word in its widest meaning signifies washing with water. Volumes have been written discussing whether under this term immersion and sprinkling are both permissible. In so far as Christ's purpose appears in the words of institution, Baptism is not dependent on either form. The discussion appears to me on a par with that as to whether the Lord's Supper may be observed with any but unleavened bread.

Neither does Christ say anything as to the symbolism of baptism, and we can gather that only from the context. It comes in the midst of the commission, and only by paying attention to the commission as a whole can we understand the meaning of the commission to baptize.

The command to baptize follows the command to make disciples of all the nations. Baptism, then, is a means toward making a disciple. The first thing to be noticed here is that it makes discipleship an individual question. The first command in the commission is universal; this universal commission can be accomplished only by dealing with individuals. The command is not to baptize the nations, but to baptize the individuals of the nations. This is the only meaning which the Greek will bear,[1] and it is necessarily involved in the word "baptize." Baptism cannot be administered to a nation, only to an

[1] The word for nations (ἔθνη) is neuter; the word for them (αὐτούς) is masculine.

individual. We have seen how the character of a nation may come to be so permeated by Christianity that it may be said to be discipled—to be a Christian nation.[1] But that does not make all the members of that nation disciples. The position held by some that, when a nation has been Christianized, baptism is no longer obligatory, is utterly groundless. It is by individual after individual being baptized into the Church that the Church in a nation is perpetuated, and it is through the Church being perpetuated that the Christian character of the nation is maintained.

Then it is the outward badge of discipleship, the name of a disciple, that baptism gives. The command is to baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. That means that he who is baptized is received into the community of those who confess that name as the name of the God in whom they believe. We must beware of thinking that Jesus in these words appointed a formula. He did not teach formulas: He taught truths, and left His disciples to clothe them in forms or formulas, as they might find it expedient. There is no evidence that these words of Christ were used by the Church as a formula either when this Gospel was written or afterwards. The first instance we have of the Threefold Name being used is in Justin Martyr, and there it is in the form now used in most of the Churches, *in* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, not *into* their

[1] See pp. 208–212.

name—that is, with the authority of the Trinity, not into the faith or Church of the Trinity. There are only few indications of the practice of the primitive Church, but they show that it was always the name of Christ that was used: sometimes,[1] as by Peter, it is baptism in His name; sometimes,[2] as by Paul, it is baptism into His name.

Much ingenuity has been expended in trying to reconcile the words of Christ's commission with the apostolic use of only the name of Christ in baptism. The favourite explanation is that baptism into the name of one Person of the Trinity is equivalent to baptism into the name of the Three.[3] This supposes the apostles to have been theologians, who anticipated the discussions of the divines of the fourth century. The mistake lies in supposing that the words of the commission are meant as a formula of baptism, instead of a declaration of the faith, into the confession of which it introduced those who received it. It is more satisfactory to assume merely that those who believed were baptized into the name of Christ as the Master, whose teaching they were to follow. A historical example cited by Paul will make this clear. He says of the fathers of Israel that they "were all baptized into (εἰς) Moses in the cloud and in the sea."[4] In studying the Threefold Name we saw that it was the name by which Jesus

[1] Acts ii. 38 (ἐπί), x. 48 (ἐν).
[2] Acts viii. 16 (εἰς), xix. 3, 5; 1 Cor. i. 13–15.
[3] Hastings' *Dict. of the Bible*, art. "Baptism," vol. i. pp. 241, 242.
[4] 1 Cor. x. 2.

taught His Church to know God; as Jehovah was the name by which Moses taught the children of Israel to know God.[1] It was as worshippers of Jehovah that the children of Israel came out of Egypt; yet Paul does not say that they were baptized into Jehovah, whose was the name, but into Moses, who taught them the name. But the very fact that they accepted Moses as their teacher implied that they accepted as their God Jehovah whom he revealed to them. And so, too, the very fact that the disciples were baptized into the name of Christ as their Lord and Master implied their faith in the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, as the God whom He revealed.

Baptism, then, is the outer badge of discipleship. The Church, in so far as its external aspect is concerned, consists of those who are baptized; and the vital importance of this will appear as we further study the subject. We have now to ask, What is the reality behind this outward symbol? And the answer is in the subsequent words of the commission, "Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."[2]

These words sum up what we have been studying in the last two chapters—the teaching to be given by the Church, the power to be given by Christ. These are the two elements

[1] See pp. 153–155.

[2] Matt. xxviii. 20.

in regeneration: the truth and the power of the Spirit. When the truth finds a lodgment in the soul, and is vitalized by the Holy Spirit, the new birth takes place; by the continual learning of the truth, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit thereon, the new life is cherished. The teaching of the truth is the work of the Church, the giving of the Holy Spirit is the work of Christ. This great double truth is taught in baptism. It is the seal of a covenant; the Church covenanting to teach, Christ covenanting to be with His Church in her teaching. Every time that baptism is administered, Christ meets His Church and says to her in the sacrament, "Teach them (those who are baptized) to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you;" and He renews the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway."

The efficacy of baptism, then, lies not in the ordinance itself, but in that which it symbolizes: the teaching of the truth, the blessing of Christ. If baptism be not followed by teaching, no result may be expected. If the truth be faithfully taught, the Church has the covenant promise of her Lord that He will give the blessing on it. It is the privilege of all who engage in Christian work, of parents who teach their children in their own homes, of teachers who teach the truth in schools, of preachers who are seeking to build up believers, of evangelists who are seeking to win the godless, and of missionaries who are seeking to win the heathen,

to know that they are not alone, but that Christ is with them, and that their labour is not in vain. That great truth remains steadfast, independent of baptism which symbolizes it. But, just as the Lord's Supper nourishes the faith of believers, though forgiveness of sins is independent of it, so baptism is meant to strengthen the zeal of believers, reminding them of the service to which they are called, and of the promise of the Master to be with them in their service. Baptism is generally looked on as a means of grace to those who are baptized, and it is so if it stimulates them to work out their own salvation, with the assurance that Christ, according to His covenant, is working along with them. But it is a means of grace to them because it is primarily a means of grace to those who administer it, reminding them of the duty of teaching to which it calls them, and of the divine aid they have in so doing. I speak of *those* who administer baptism, for though in each observance only one administers it, he represents the whole Church, which becomes responsible for the teaching of each one who is baptized.

It is therefore important that baptism should have a more prominent place in the Church service than it usually has. There is too much a tendency in all churches to consider baptism a sacrament only for the subject baptized, and not for the Church that baptizes. This leads in some cases to baptism being administered

after the congregation has been dismissed, and in others to private baptism. While allowing that such practice is in some cases legitimate and even necessary, I yet maintain that it encourages a view of baptism that is inadequate, and robs the Church of a great means of grace. Baptism is a sacrament for the whole body of believers as truly as the Lord's Supper; showing forth to them the resurrection life of their Lord, as the latter shows forth to them His death; reminding them of the service to which He calls them, as the latter reminds them of the salvation He has purchased for them. Let it be brought before them as the sacrament of the great work to which they are called along with the Church universal, of winning the world to Christ, of winning the lands of the heathen to own Him, of winning each new generation in Christian lands to own Him as their fathers did.

This brings us to the question, To whom is baptism to be administered? Here we touch a controversy that has long divided the Christian Church—whether the children of believers are to be baptized. It is foreign to my purpose to enter on this controversy. I will therefore confine myself to what we may learn from the commission itself, and seek an answer that will apply wherever the commission is being carried out, whether in Christian or heathen lands. If we answer the question in the words of the institution, the only possible answer is, *Baptism is*

to be administered to those who are to be taught to observe the things that Christ has commanded. If this were the only reference in the New Testament this answer would be absolute. It is certainly the most authoritative, and any conclusions drawn from other passages must be brought into line with it. I do not say anything as to how the principle should be applied in Christian communities, but proceed to consider how it is to be applied in non-Christian lands.

Here we find ourselves in the same position as were the first disciples in beginning their great work of evangelizing the nations. Only those whom by their preaching and teaching they had convinced that Jesus was Christ and Lord, and who professed faith in Him, could they teach to observe the things which He had commanded. Only to such was baptism administered, and after baptism full instruction was given. "They continued in the apostles' teaching and fellowship."[1] It is only on the same principles that the work can be rightly carried on in heathen lands now. There are some who maintain that, seeing that Christ has commanded first to baptize and then to teach, it is the duty of the missionary to baptize all who express any willingness to be baptized, and to teach them afterwards the truths they are to believe. This is to mutilate Christ's command, not to obey it. He does not give the command merely to teach those that are baptized the truth,

[1] Acts ii. 42.

but to teach them to *observe* all the things He has commanded. They are to be taught to carry out in their lives the truths they have accepted. Until they have at all events intelligently accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their Master, they cannot be taught to observe the things He has commanded; and such acceptance can be induced only by the teaching and preaching of the truth. The heralding of the truth must precede baptism, and the full teaching of it must come after. Without that no permanent fruit can be expected. Baptism, divorced from what it signifies, cannot save.

The devoted Xavier baptized multitudes in India and China; but they did not understand the meaning of the ceremony, and they were not taught afterwards. The great majority relapsed into heathenism, or rather they had never really left it. I have seen the same thing in a Protestant mission in India, where baptism had been administered multitudinously on the basis that baptism precedes teaching. In one case that I could test, it was administered to upwards of four hundred; and a few months after, when the simple test of the Government census was applied, the number who returned themselves as Christians was under a score.

On the other hand, care must be taken that the command of Christ be obeyed, and that baptism be retained as the badge of discipleship. The record of Christ's words in the close of Mark's Gospel contains the saying, "He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."[1] Obviously the essential statement here is, He that believeth shall be saved, and he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. That is the essence of the gospel, and states fully the spiritual truth. Why, then, is baptism joined with faith as a condition of salvation, and its neglect not joined with disbelieving as a condition of condemnation? Because where there is no true faith, baptism can have no saving effect; where there is true faith, it will manifest itself by confessing Christ, and in a heathen land the only way in which this can be effectively done is by baptism. Light is cast on this from Rom. x. 10, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The meaning of this is obvious. If a man believes in his heart, but refuses outward confession, there is contradiction between his faith and conduct; his faith is not strong enough to control his life, and the logic of his position would require him to renounce his faith. Everything in it tends to stifle his faith and to prevent his salvation. If, on the other hand, he openly confesses his faith, he shows that so far it has power to control his life; the logic of his position requires him to renounce all evil and live as a disciple of Christ. It helps him on to full salvation.

In a Christian community confession with the

[1] Mark xvi. 16.

lips and life is all that is necessary for this; but in a community where Christianity is struggling with heathenism, baptism is necessary to make adequate confession. It is only thus that the boundary is crossed which separates Christianity from heathenism. So long as a man is not baptized he is reckoned with the heathen; and it will generally be found that he has not renounced what is essential in his old faith. At all events, the way is open for his returning within its pale, if the requirements of the new faith should be too heavy for him. Especially is this the case in such a land as India, where the prevailing religion admits any amount of intellectual assent or dissent, and insists only on certain ceremonial observances. A man may believe all the doctrines of Christianity and yet be reckoned a good Hindu, if he has not been baptized and has not broken the rules of his caste. With the spread of Christian missions and education in India, a knowledge of the principles of the Christian religion has been widely diffused, and numbers are convinced of their truth. If the question were merely who believed Christianity to be true and Hinduism to be false, the number would be far in excess of those who are reckoned as Christians. But missionaries take no account of them, save as a class on whom the Holy Spirit may work to change opinions into practice, and impel them to seek baptism as the confession which Christ requires. Teaching without baptism is as ineffectual as baptism without

teaching.[1] Both are appointed to go together in discipling the nations.

From those who receive baptism we turn to those who administer it. In ordinary conditions it is administered by the ordained ministers of the Church, but that is not the absolute rule, nor was it the apostolic practice; and from losing sight of this, the modern Church seems to me to have lost sight of the place which baptism might have in discipling the nations.

According to the Roman Catholic view, not only may a layman administer baptism, but a heretic, an infidel, or a Jew may do so;[2] and if it be done in proper form, and with true intention, then the child is truly baptized. This is a natural consequence of the magical view of the sacrament which the Church of Rome takes, but it is utterly inconsistent with the spiritual purpose of our Lord in instituting it. As the seal of a covenant between our Lord and His Church for teaching saving truth to those who are baptized, it cannot be administered by one who is not himself within that covenant. Only a believer

[1] The Salvation Army neither baptizes nor teaches its followers, and so the thousands of converts which it has from time to time reported disappear as suddenly as they were made. The Army has a distinct and most important function in Christian communities where there is much mere formalism and a quickening of the spirit is required. But it can never be greatly successful in work for which Baptism and teaching are the prescribed work of the human agency, unless it greatly modifies its methods.

[2] *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, chap. ii. Quest. 23.

in Christ, only a member of His Church, may administer that ordinance.

But when we have said this, we have stated all the limitations we are warranted in making. Christ in instituting baptism did not limit its administration to any order of men; and the early Church in its practice recognized the right of all believers to baptize. The apostles did not consider it a prerogative of their own: they rather thought they were called to something higher. When Peter received the household of Cornelius into the Church, he did not baptize them himself, but commanded others to do so.[1] When he went with John to Samaria, it was not to baptize those who had confessed Christ, but to confirm them, and to bestow on them the gift of the Holy Spirit.[2] Paul says distinctly that his vocation was not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, though on occasion he departed from this rule.[3]

It is equally evident that the early believers considered themselves warranted to baptize any who professed faith in Jesus Christ. How did the wonderful extension of the Church from Jerusalem to Antioch take place? Not by the work of the apostles, for they remained at Jerusalem. The six deacons, who were the only other recognized ministers, can have done comparatively little. It was by the ordinary members of the Church, the multitudes who were scattered abroad by the persecution, that the gospel was

[1] Acts x. 48. [2] Acts viii. 14–17. [3] 1 Cor. i. 14–17.

spread. And there can be little doubt that, wherever they went, they baptized those who believed. They did not tell their converts to wait till an apostle or a deacon came that way, but took the matter into their own hands, as part of the commission which their Lord had given to all the members of His Church. Had they not done so, the Church would never have spread as it did. The persecution, instead of being the life of the Church, would have been its death. Limitations did spring up afterwards; but they were matters of prudence and of ecclesiastical order, and should not be allowed to stand in the way when a recurrence of the original conditions requires a return to the original practice.

Generally in mission fields the missionary retains the authority to administer baptism in his own hands, or in those of fully ordained natives. In this he separates himself from the example of the apostles, and hampers himself with a restriction which would have paralysed their work. When converts are led by business or other causes to settle far from a mission station, when they seek, as many of them do, and as all of them should do, to win their heathen neighbours to faith in Christ, and when they succeed in their efforts, their converts, to be baptized, must either go to the nearest mission station, which may be too far off for them, or wait for the visit of a missionary, which may not take place for years. Thus they are left in an indefinite position, believers in Christ, but without the outward sign

of union with Him; called to be steadfast, but without the help which the outward sign of discipleship gives. We can see how this hinders steadfastness and progress, and how much more heartily native Christians would labour in such cases if they had authority to receive into the visible Church those whom they had won. With present methods we can hardly expect a reproduction of the experience of Paul, who, when he had planted a church, as at Thessalonica, and had gone on to pursue his work elsewhere, could rejoice afterwards that it had become a centre for the spread of the gospel, for the increase of the Church.[1]

In some cases where the greatest progress has been made, the original practice has been perforce adopted. In the earlier part of last century, when the missionaries were driven out of Madagascar, and the native Christians were left without an ordained ministry, they themselves baptized all the converts to the faith, and their numbers continually grew, notwithstanding the terrible persecutions to which they were exposed. Following national habits, they selected from among themselves men of mature age and experience, and these, though not ordained, virtually fulfilled pastoral functions. On the reopening of the mission in 1862, the new missionaries, under the guidance of the Rev. William Ellis, recognized these men as pastors, and they were formally put into the office.

[1] 1 Thess. i. 8.

It is a question deserving serious consideration, whether the practice forced on the Church in this instance should not be more generally acted on in cases where it would obviously facilitate the evangelization of a country. There might no doubt be abuses, and discretion must be used in granting such a liberty. Where in a mission apostolic methods are followed, apostolic liberty may be allowed. Where confession of Christ's name implies sacrifice; where converts are expected from the beginning to support the Church that receives them, instead of looking to it for support; where enthusiasm for Christ impels the native Christians to seek to spread His kingdom, —it seems right that, when access to the regular ministry of the Church is not open, they should have liberty to baptize those whom they have won to confess Christ. In such cases it is probable that the converts will be true men, though among them an Ananias or a Sapphira may be found. Where, on the other hand, the nature of the field is such that the temporal care of the converts is for a time thrown on the mission, or there are manifest temporal advantages to be gained from a profession of Christianity, it is better that authority to receive converts into the Church should be retained in the hands of those who are responsible for its ruling and discipline.

These are questions of Christian prudence, and must be considered in view of what is best alike for those who are received by baptism into the

Church and for the Church that receives them. What is supremely needful to remember is, that baptism is an appointed means for discipling the nations, that it symbolizes and seals all the powers, human and divine, by which this is to be accomplished—the work and teaching of the Church, the presence and power of Christ. In proportion as these great truths are kept before the minds of believers at every administration of the sacrament, will it keep fresh in their minds the height and breadth of the service to which it calls them, encourage them with the great hope that no faithful work done will be in vain in the Lord, and enable them to realize that, as Christ's sacramental host, they may go forward to win all nations to Him.

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